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H M meets UK Foreign Secretary

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday to David Lammy, United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

The meeting reviewed the historical and strategic relations between the two countries, as well as the Omani-British partnership that boosts economic diversification in the sultanate.

Lammy lauded His Majesty the Sultan's modern development policies and the tangible impact of these across the country, while reaffirming the British government's keenness to bolstering cooperation and investment in various fields.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his appreciation for the bilateral cooperation and coordination between the two countries' governments, welcoming current partnerships and future prospects.



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with David Lammy, UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs at Al Barakah Palace

Lammy also touched on several regional and international developments and heard His Majesty the Sultan's perspectives on these matters. He expressed interest in the ceasefire efforts in Gaza and the pursuit of peace and stability, as well as the ongoing US-Iranian negotiations through Omani mediation to reach a new agreement concerning Tehran's nuclear programme for peaceful purposes.

THEIR MEETING REVIEWS
HISTORICAL AND STRATEGIC
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
TWO COUNTRIES

Oman, UK bilateral
cooperation

Later in the day, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received Lammy in his office.

During the meeting, the two ministers affirmed the joint desire

to follow up on all areas of cooperation and ways of promoting these to serve joint interests.

The two also emphasised the importance of continued consultation, coordination and cooperation in all efforts that would strengthen the foundations of regional security, stability and peace. They also supported resolving issues through dialogue and diplomatic means, ensuring greater benefits for all countries and peoples.

Lammy underlined Oman's support for negotiations aimed at finalising a free trade agreement between the GCC countries and the UK.

The meeting was attended by Munthir Mahfoudh al Manthri, Head of Europe Department in Foreign Ministry, Sir Oliver Robins, Permanent Undersecretary at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Lianne Sanders, UK Ambassador to Oman.

Stable policies and regulatory reforms in focus at world forum to attract investors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman welcomed 83 CEOs from 30 countries at the inaugural Advantage Oman Forum on Sunday, marking a crucial step in the sultanate's efforts to attract global investment and foster international partnerships. The two-day event, held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, was officially launched in Muscat by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

Organised by MoCIIP through its investment arm, Invest Oman, the forum has brought together over 250 high-level delegates, including international investors, policymakers and business leaders. Designed as a strategic platform for dialogue, the forum will address key global economic themes such as climate finance, shifting capital flows, regional in-



Our real advantage
lies not in our
policies but in our
people

HE QAIS ALYOUSEF

tegration and long-term investment strategies.

The event comes amid global economic uncertainty, prompting countries to reassess how best to

attract and sustain investment. Oman is using the forum to highlight its stable policy environment, regulatory reforms and diversified economy - key pillars of its Vision 2040 development strategy in alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Discussions on Day 1 of the forum focused on several priority sectors, including clean energy, logistics, sustainable tourism and agri-tech. Emerging investment themes such as environmental,

social and governance (ESG) frameworks, green hydrogen, digital infrastructure and resilient supply chains were also explored. Oman's ongoing reforms and innovation-driven initiatives were presented as case studies.

In his opening remarks, H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasised Oman's reputation as a reliable partner in a world marked by geopolitical uncertainty and

economic disruption. "Oman has long served as a bridge between East and West, tradition and innovation," he said, recalling the country's historic role in peaceful engagement and trade, including its landmark move in 1844 as the first Arab country to send an ambassador to the United States.

H E Yousef highlighted Oman's economic transformation, guided by four key pillars: societal innovation, economic diversification, environmental stewardship and strong governance. He also pointed to key indicators of Oman's economic resilience, such as forecasted GDP growth of 3.4% for 2025, 18% year-on-year increase in foreign direct investment over the past five years, and projection to become world's sixth-largest hydrogen producer by 2030.

"However, our real advantage lies not in our policies but in our people," H E Yousef noted, inviting participants to experience Oman's renowned hospitality.

Tracking devices must
in water tankers: APSR

Our Correspondent
Muscat

All independent water and wastewater tanker operators in Oman must instal tracking devices under new regulations aimed at improving service monitoring and operational compliance.

The decision, issued by H E Salim bin Nasser bin Saeed al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), forms part of Decision No 31/2025 which took effect on April 23. It covers tanker operations involved in the transport of potable water, non-potable water and sewage.

Operators are required to obtain permits from licensing authorities and adhere to specific geographic and service agreements, including technical standards, complaint handling procedures, inspection protocols and emergency response guidelines.

An electronic record system will also be established to track



compliance, registering operator and subscriber information, tanker plates, discharge points and wastewater sources.

The new regulations introduce a standard colour code for tankers - potable water tankers must be painted blue and marked 'potable water', non-potable tankers green with 'non-potable water', and sewage tankers yellow with 'sewage'.

Operators have one year to regularise their status. Those who fail to comply face fines ranging from RO50 to RO50,000, with daily penalties for repeated violations.

Expatriates report high acceptance in Oman in annual survey

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Tolerance towards expatriates in Oman remains consistently high, according to the 2025 Public Survey on Tolerance conducted by National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Conducted between January 13 and 23, the survey found that 90.9% of expatriate respondents viewed Omani society as tolerant, a slight rise from 90.7% recorded in 2024. The Tolerance Index, which measures expatriate acceptance and integration, increased 0.2% compared to the previous survey.



90.9% expats believe Omani society is tolerant

95.6% reported no experience of discrimination

90.4% felt accepted by society despite cultural differences

86.7% expats felt free to express their views

Among the key findings, 95.6% of expatriates said they had not experienced discrimination or mistreatment by Omanis, up from 93.6% a year earlier. Meanwhile, 90.4% of respon-

dents felt accepted by society despite cultural differences, though slightly down from 92% in 2024.

In terms of freedom of expression, 86.7% of expatriates reported feeling free to express

their views on everyday topics, a figure almost unchanged from 86.6% last year.

The survey highlighted variations based on gender and age. Male expatriates reported higher

non-discrimination levels at 96.5%, compared to 93.4% among females. Expatriates over 50 years of age recorded the highest rate of non-discrimination at 97.5%, followed by 96.5% among those aged 18-29 and 95% for the 30-49 age group.

On societal acceptance, 93.9% of female expatriates reported feeling accepted, compared to 89.2% of males. Acceptance was highest among expatriates over 50 at 94.6%, while the 18-29 age group recorded the lowest at 86.8%.

Regarding freedom of expression, 87.1% of male expatriates said they felt free to express their

opinions, compared to 85.8% of females. Expatriates aged over 50 showed the highest levels of freedom at 89.6%, more than those aged 30-49 at 86.2% and the 18-29 group at 85.9%.

The Tolerance Index is based on three main indicators - absence of discrimination, societal acceptance of expatriates despite cultural differences, and freedom of expression on everyday issues.

The poll was conducted through telephone interviews using an electronic questionnaire covering a simple random sample of 1,425 expatriates of different genders and age groups across all governorates.

09

Gaza death toll surges to over 52,200

15

Hatim al Taie attends world journalists meet in Seoul

VALIDITY EQUALITY

Should expatriates in Oman enjoy longer validity driving licences? Many think so. Amidst rising living costs and a strong sense of belonging to the sultanate, residents are urging authorities to extend licence validity beyond the current two years aligning with practices elsewhere in the region. Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said on the issue:



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

With Muscat International Book Fair rekindling the habit of reading, how can we further encourage young minds to embrace books over screens?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

Selvi Prabha
Private sector employee

The validity can be for at least five years. I strongly believe that expatriates residing in Oman are sincere in abiding by the rules and regulations of the country. We have to pay some amount every two years to renew our licence. Updating personal information - health, vision, etc - will not be much different every two years.

Mohammad Aslam
Businessman

The rule should be changed to at least five years for expatriates. Over the last few years - mainly after the pandemic - expenses have risen all over the world, including Oman. Frequent recurring expenses is tough.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA
binte_oman

We love Oman and are proud to call it our second home. We work hard, contribute to the economy and respect the culture - just like citizens do. It's disheartening that residents are only given a two-year validity driving licence, while citizens enjoy ten years. We believe in fairness and equal

treatment. Extending the licence validity for residents would not only reduce the burden of frequent renewals but also reflect appreciation for the efforts we make every single day. We hope the authorities reconsider and offer the same ten-year validity for residents. After all, we're part of Oman's growth story too.

Alnisa Vikinga

It should be made of ten years' validity as soon as possible like anywhere else in the world. Don't understand why this was taken away from us expats.



Jaison

It should be of ten years' validity like before or at least five years like in a few other countries in the region.

Dua

We love Oman and hope that Oman loves us, too. Residents should be given same treatment like citizens because we also work hard to earn a living.

Terence Pereira

It should be the same as it was before - ten years. Perhaps, after a certain age, it can be reduced to four years.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily.

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TRA issues new billing regulation to enhance telecom services

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a new regulation aimed at enhancing accuracy, transparency and fairness of billing practices in the telecom sector.

Under Decision No 1152/2/30/2025-8, TRA has introduced a comprehensive framework governing how licensed telecom

operators manage their billing systems covering system design, customer invoicing, error reporting, risk management and performance auditing.

The regulation, divided into five chapters, addresses definitions and general provisions; licensees' obligations; tariffs, cost and payment rates; auditing and performance measurement; and administrative penalties.

Among its key provisions, the



regulation mandates that operators establish precise billing procedures, maintain detailed usage

records for a minimum of two years, and create a register identifying the main risks to billing

systems. Technical and information security controls must also be implemented in line with international best practices.

Licensed operators are required to regularly test their billing systems, document results and correct any errors identified. They must also conduct independent audits according to specific guidelines to ensure compliance and reliability.

The new regulation further

stipulates that billing systems and major updates require prior approval from the authority. Operators must maintain accurate tariff records, provide itemised statements on request and offer instalment payment options to customers.

Any discrepancy between actual billing systems and approved tariffs must be corrected immediately, with licensees required to notify TRA within 24

hours of detecting errors that could affect consumers.

TRA emphasised the fact that the new regulation is designed to protect consumer rights, promote fair competition, enhance service quality and ensure alignment with international standards. In case of violations, TRA may issue warnings or impose financial penalties in accordance with the Telecommunications Regulatory Law.

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ROP study on Arabian horses wins global acclaim

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A groundbreaking study by Royal Oman Police (ROP) marking a significant milestone in veterinary science has earned international recognition from equine experts and enthusiasts.

Published in the peer-reviewed journal *Veterinary World*, the study is the first to evaluate safety and efficacy of oral edible bird's nest supplementation on purebred Arabian horses. Edible bird's nest (EBN), a product of salivary secretions of swiftlet birds, is well-known for medicinal and nutritional properties.

Led by Lt Col Dr Khalid bin Obaid al Khaldi, Assistant Director of Veterinary Services Department at Mounted Police Command, the research highlights ROP's commitment to applied science and institutional excellence. "This achievement reflects our efforts to nurture national talent and foster partnerships with local and international institutions," said Lt Col Khaldi.

The study compared the EBN supplement - produced using spray-dried technology - with the widely used Premium E supplement known for its high vitamin E content. Findings showed that



This recognition gives our study significant scientific value and places it at the forefront of specialised veterinary research

LT COL DR KHALID AL KHALDI

EBN significantly enhanced immune function, liver health and muscle condition, outperforming Premium E without the side effects of prolonged vitamin E use.

"This recognition gives our study significant scientific value and places it at the forefront of specialised veterinary research," Lt Col Khaldi noted.

The paper interweaves

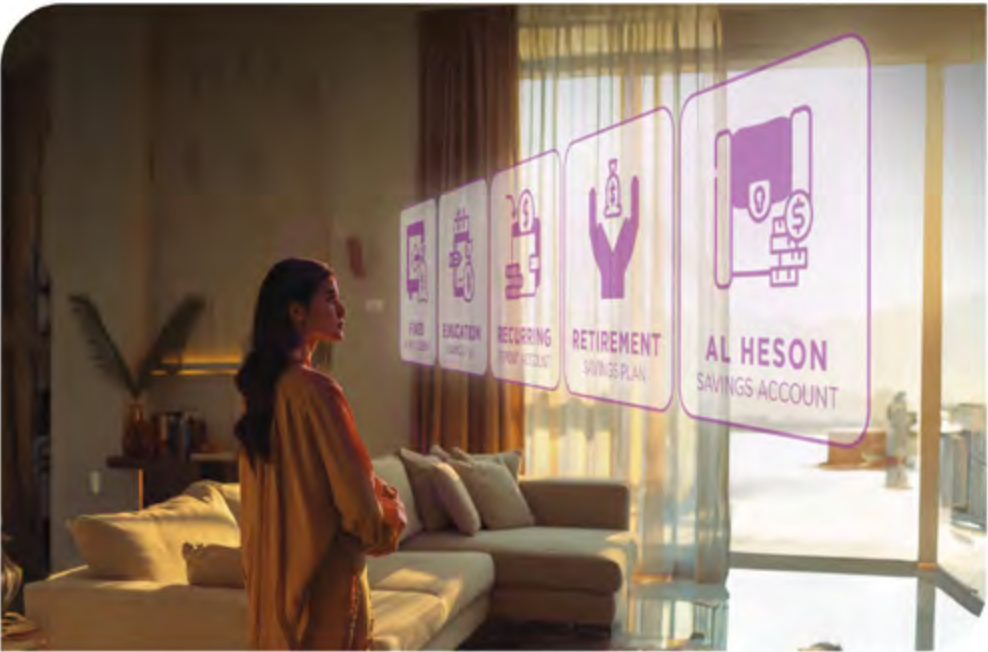
Oman's cultural heritage, recounting the story of Zad al Rakeb - the Arabian horse gifted by Prophet Sulaiman (PBUH) to the Azd tribe of Oman. Referenced in Omani historical records, the tale underscores the deep-rooted bond between Omanis and Arabian horses.

The research was supervised by Mounted Police Command

and conducted in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia, the National University of Malaysia, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences' Research and Studies Centre.

"Publication of this work in a prestigious journal with an impact factor of 1.4 is an international endorsement of ROP's scientific and institutional performance," Lt Col Khaldi added. "It shows that ROP's excellence extends beyond security to include innovation in veterinary science and equine care."

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Organ donation law to combat illegal trade, reward donors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The new law ‘Regulating Transfer and Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues’, promulgated by a Royal Decree (No 44/2025), establishes comprehensive regulations for the transfer and transplantation of human organs and tissues.

A key feature of the legislation is the introduction of a prestigious medal to honour organ donors. The medal, details of which will be outlined in a future Royal Decree, will be awarded to living donors. In cases where the donation is from a deceased individual, the medal will be presented posthumously to the donor’s next of kin or spouse in recognition of their life-saving contribution.

The law is structured into five chapters with 36 articles, outlining procedures for both living and deceased organ donations. A National Committee will be established within the Ministry of Health to oversee policy imple-



mentation, licensing, and medical standards related to organ donations. The committee will also be responsible for promoting public awareness and ensuring ethical practices in the field.

A prominent aspect of the law is its firm stance against the illegal trade of human organs. Article 7 explicitly prohibits the sale or purchase of organs and human tissues, with severe penalties for those found guilty of

A key feature of the legislation is the introduction of a prestigious medal to honour donors

coercion, fraud, or illegal transactions. Offenders may face imprisonment and significant fines. Strict conditions have also

been established for living organ donations. Donors must provide voluntary written consent, and the recipient must be a close relative or spouse. In certain cases, donations from non-relatives may be permitted, but only with specific approval. The sale or coercion of donations, particularly involving vulnerable individuals such as children or incapacitated persons, is strictly prohibited.

Medical institutions involved

in organ transplants are required to be properly licensed and adhere to strict ethical and medical standards. Accredited facilities must have ethics and medical committees to ensure that all procedures are conducted in line with scientific and moral principles. To protect both donors and recipients, the law grants donors the right to withdraw their consent at any point before the transplant procedure begins. Any agreement contradicting this right will be deemed invalid.

The law also offers lifelong incentives to citizens who donate organs, encouraging this selfless act. Penalties for violations are severe, with prison sentences of up to ten years and fines of up to RO100,000 for offenders. Entities found guilty of participating in illegal organ trade may face fines of up to RO5mn and the suspension or closure of their operations. Additionally, the law encourages the reporting of illegal activities, offering whistleblowers exemption from penalties if they prevent crimes before they occur.



Oman braces for over 10% rise in summer power demand

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is preparing for a surge in electricity demand during the summer of 2025, with loads expected to rise by more than 10%, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announced.

OETC, a member of the Nama Group, confirmed the full readiness of its technical teams and operational systems to ensure the reliability and stability of the transmission network during the peak period. The announcement follows a series of technical workshops held to review load forecasts, discuss the economic operation of generation units, and explore solutions to enhance network performance across the sultanate.

Eng Sultan al Rawahi, General Manager of the Load Dispatch Centre at OETC, said, “All vital systems and technical teams in the company are fully prepared to operate with high efficiency during the upcoming period. With more than 1,000 megawatts of clean solar energy added, the production capacity from renewable sources has increased to over 1,550 megawatts. This will significantly impact power distribution operations, diversify energy sources, and address the challenges of integrating them into the network.”

He added, “OETC is committed to reviewing and monitoring all operational processes to ensure they are implemented according to the highest standard of quality and efficiency, with the goal of enhancing the sustainability of the electricity network across the sultanate.”

OETC is responsible for transmitting and managing electricity within the national network, operating at voltages of 132kV and above. The company also oversees the 220kV interconnection lines between Oman and the GCC Interconnection Network, ensuring the flow of electricity from production plants to load centres across all governorates.

MoSD raises awareness on children’s rights

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), through the Directorate General of Social Development in Muscat, hosted a dialogue session on Sunday titled ‘Raising Awareness about Children’s Rights and the Child Law’.

The event gathered around 100 participants, including school students and representatives from children-focused organisations.

A ministry official explained that the session aimed to enhance children’s awareness of



their rights and roles in the society, while also discussing key challenges and societal issues affecting children. The event focused on raising community awareness of the importance of providing care and protection for children in a safe and supportive

environment.

The session highlighted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, alongside the Child Law issued by Royal Decree No 22/2014. The law guarantees children’s right to

life, survival, and development, ensuring protection from discrimination based on factors such as colour, gender, origin, language, religion, or social status. It also emphasised the priority of children’s best interests in all decisions and procedures

concerning them, while recognising their right to participate, express their opinions, and voice their views.

The initiative is part of MoSD’s efforts to promote children’s rights, empower them intellectually and socially, and prepare them to be active contributors to society. The ministry is also working to strengthen the community’s role in ensuring the necessary care and protection for children. MoSD thanked the public for reporting cases of abuse, adding that complaints can be made through the call centre number 1555 or the child protection hotline 1100.

Muscat book fair calls libraries vital to sultanate’s cultural legacy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National libraries play a crucial role in advancing the cultural movement in Oman, a seminar held at the 29th Muscat International Book Fair on Saturday highlighted.

Titled ‘Libraries, Cultural Centers, and Manuscripts in North Sharqiyah Governorate’ - the seminar organised by North Sharqiyah, the guest of honour at this year’s fair - brought together a group of writers and researchers to discuss the significance of libraries in preserving

Oman’s heritage, the challenges they face in the digital age, and their visions for the future.

Dr Saeed bin Saif al Maskari, editor of *Al Falq* magazine, highlighted the role libraries play in sustaining Oman’s cultural and literary movement. He emphasised how these institutions are essential in preserving the country’s rich history through their collections of documents and manuscripts. “Libraries are vital resources for researchers, students, and the public, supporting both academic and cultural endeavours,” he said.

However, Maskari also



pointed to significant challenges faced by libraries, particularly in the preservation of fragile manuscripts due to Oman’s humid climate. He noted that many valuable collections, often located in remote villages, re-

main largely unknown, owing to urban migration and the rise of digital media.

Dr Mubarak bin Abdullah al Rashidi, head of Sinaw Culture Centre, discussed the foundational role of libraries in spread-

ing knowledge throughout the society. He explained that libraries aim to develop the skills of youth, guide children toward moral values, and foster a lifelong habit of reading through their diverse programmes.

Researcher Khalid bin Saeed al Rashidi elaborated on the diverse functions of libraries. While some are primarily educational and scientific, he stressed that libraries also have a broader cultural, intellectual and historical significance, particularly in their provision of manuscripts, documents and rare books.

Mohammed al Aysari, another researcher, revealed that North Sharqiyah governorate ranks second after Muscat governorate in terms of the number of manuscripts housed in private libraries and archives. He identified the Omani Manuscript

House at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Sayyid Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Bussaidi Library as the two most prominent repositories.

The Noor al Din al Salmi Library and Sheikh Salem bin Hamad al Harthy Library follow in third and fourth place, respectively.

Aysari also noted that the wilayat of Al Qabil leads North Sharqiyah in manuscript holdings, with 749 manuscripts.

It is followed by Bidiyah (685), Ibra (241), Mudhaibi (195), Sinaw (119), and Dima Wa Al Taien (91).

BRIEFS

Saudi Arabia doubles down on mining: S&P

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia’s long-term economic growth will increasingly rely on the metals and mining sector. This development is in line with the Vision 2030 programme, which aims to reduce the country’s oil dependency, S&P Global Ratings said in a new report.

The mining sector currently accounts for about 1.5% of Saudi Arabia’s GDP. The Saudi government aims to increase mining companies’ GDP contribution to \$75bn by 2035, from approximately \$31.96bn in 2023

“Saudi Arabia’s proactive measures and substantial resources may help offset continued cost pressures and support the resilience of metals and mining companies’ credit profiles,” S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Hina Shueb said.

Unlike some global peers, Saudi metals and mining companies benefit from strong government support, new regulatory frameworks – such as the Mining Investment Law – and significant government-led capital investments in mega projects and domestic infrastructure.

Yet the sector suffers from strict regulations, harsh operating and environmental conditions, insufficient infrastructure, global commodity price fluctuations, and stiff competition, S&P noted.

Tatweer plans to implement several new projects in Duqm zone this year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Company for the Development of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer Duqm) is planning to implement several new projects this year aimed at enhancing investment in the Duqm area.

The projects will be implemented through both new developments and the management of existing assets or the initiation of new investment ventures, according to the CEO of Tatweer Duqm.

Key planned projects include the construction of a central fish market in Duqm and the launch of an abalone farming facility that adheres to aquaculture standards. These initiatives aim to develop the fisheries sector and increase its economic returns.

Other planned developments include tourism, real estate, entertainment, retail, commercial services, and green energy projects. The company also intends to develop an integrated residential complex to enhance the quality of life in Duqm, along with other projects currently under study with investors, according to a press statement.

Tatweer Duqm announced that the asset portfolio it manages in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) rose to approximately RO1.2bn by the end of 2024.



Key planned projects include the construction of a central fish market in Duqm and the launch of an abalone farming facility. Other planned developments include tourism, real estate, entertainment, retail, commercial services, and green energy projects. Tatweer also intends to develop an integrated residential complex to enhance the quality of life in Duqm

Eng Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Wahaibi, CEO of Tatweer Duqm, said that the company is working to improve the investment environment in SEZAD by leading strategic and high-quality infrastructure projects that have been implemented in recent years. He noted that Tatweer Duqm, established in 2014, focuses on

stimulating the business and investment environment in Duqm through various initiatives, guided by Oman Vision 2040 and the SEZAD strategy for the period 2025–2030.

Wahaibi said that, over the past years, Tatweer Duqm has overseen the execution of numerous strategic projects in

SEZAD, most notably the completion of various packages for Duqm Port, the implementation of utility facilities, and the development of water and wastewater networks, as well as the management of both primary and secondary road infrastructure projects in the zone.

He explained that Tatweer



Eng Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Wahaibi

has successfully implemented more than 46 projects over the past five years. In addition, its internal management of seven projects has saved over RO12mn, reflecting the company’s technical expertise, the competency of its Omani workforce, operational efficiency, and adherence to robust governance standards.

Wahaibi explained that, in line with its commitment to service quality and asset sustainability according to international technical standards, the company, through its Omani technical staff, manages a portfolio of public assets and facilities in SEZAD worth around RO1.2bn. These include wastewater treatment plants, major and secondary roads, public facilities, dams, water drainage channels, parks, and administrative buildings.

The company’s asset management scope includes operation and maintenance, as well as oversight of sustainability and coordination with operators of

key projects such as the Port of Duqm, Duqm Airport, the dry dock, the government berth, and other developments.

Wahaibi added that this year is expected to see the completion of the internal road network in the Saay Commercial District, water drainage systems, the district’s wastewater network, the second phase of the dualisation of National Road No. 32, and the dualisation of the road from Duqm Airport to Ras Markaz.

He also highlighted Tatweer’s role in enabling investment and maximising returns in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. As a local minority shareholder, Tatweer offers on-the-ground support for project developers across various sectors. This includes assistance in site selection based on sector needs, company registration, obtaining approvals and permits, and guiding investors in securing financing from local banks and funding institutions.

He also emphasised that the company is keen to attract local financing houses to contribute through equity or quasi-debt instruments.

Regarding key projects established by the company, Wahaibi revealed that Tatweer holds a 15% stake in the logistics company ‘Imdad Logistics,’ formed to enhance logistics services in Duqm. This has become one of the success stories in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Oman, UAE boost bilateral trade and investment ties

Muscat – Dr Thani al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, said that the increase in non-oil trade between the UAE and Oman reflects strong relations between the two nations. He said these ties help ensure both countries meet their development goals and that this trajectory contributes to economic growth.

His comments came during his official visit to Muscat, where he participated in the ‘Advantage Oman Forum, 2025’, which aims to highlight future investment opportunities in emerging sectors.

Zeyoudi noted that Oman continues to maintain its position as the UAE’s second largest trading partner in the GCC, and non-oil trade between the two countries grew in 2024, to AED56.2bn, an increase of 9.8% compared to 2023, and an increase of 32.4% compared to 2020.

Zeyoudi stressed that UAE-Oman relations are an example of what a strategic partnership between neighboring countries aimed at achieving prosperity and sustainable development



Non-oil trade between the UAE and Oman rose 9.8% to more than AED56.2bn in 2024, continuing record growth

should be. Their partnership contributes to the hopes of both their peoples and boosts development on both sides.

Zeyoudi also met with H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Oman’s Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and a number of other senior officials, where the two sides exchanged ideas on upgrading ties between their countries. Zeyoudi also held meetings with other

ministers and senior officials, to discuss ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in mutually beneficial areas.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the ‘Advantage Oman Forum, 2025’ discussed the potential of the global investment environment, the trends shaping the future of promising sectors, and the discovery of opportunities.

Middle East tech startups warned to raise their game as competition intensifies

Dubai, UAE – Middle East tech startups have been warned to raise their game as global competition heats up across the region, particularly in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where an influx of international founders is redefining the landscape.

With Dubai firmly positioned as a magnet for international tech talent and Abu Dhabi emerging as one of the region’s fastest-growing startup hubs, posting a 28% increase in ecosystem value last year, founders are under growing pressure to prove their worth in an increasingly selective investment climate.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, continues its rapid rise as a startup powerhouse, backed by Vision 2030 and government initiatives that are attracting both local and overseas companies aiming to tap into the kingdom’s evolving digital economy.

Rashit Makhat, Director and co-founder of Scalio Technologies, the UAE tech venture company, said this fast-changing environment means founders must not only demonstrate strong business models and scal-



Entrepreneurs can no longer rely on a good idea alone. They need a clear plan to scale their business and they must demonstrate a deep understanding of their market

RASHIT MAKHAT

able ideas, but also show resilience, adaptability, and deep market understanding.

“Entrepreneurs can no longer rely on a good idea alone,” said Makhat. “They need a clear plan

to scale their business. They must demonstrate a deep understanding of their market, and that their product or service can not only survive, but thrive, in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

“Today’s investors are more cautious, prioritising startups with proven track records, scalable business models, and clear paths to profitability. Entrepreneurs must focus on building a strong brand, creating a loyal customer base, and demonstrating their ability to adapt to market changes.”

He points to the success of regional startups like eyewa, the Middle East’s largest online eyewear retailer, as an example of the level of maturity and clarity investors now expect. The company raised \$100mn in Series C funding towards the end of last year to expand R&D, talent acquisition, and retail presence.

“This highlights how selective investors are becoming” said Makhat. “Only startups with a clear value proposition, a solid business model, and a strong potential for growth, can attract significant funding.”

Qatar Airways is stockpiling aircraft parts to ease tariff hurdles

Doha, Qatar – Qatar Airways said it can withstand the shocks from higher tariffs thanks to its stockpile of aircraft spares that might otherwise be harder to source.

The company has built up sufficient inventory, and while there will likely be an impact on air-freight goods stemming from higher import charges, Qatar Airways will “absorb and adapt with any changes,” Chief

Executive Officer Badr al-Meer said in an interview with Bloomberg TV in Doha. Passenger demand is also sufficiently robust to keep ticket prices steady, he said.

“If I tell you tariffs are not impacting us, I will not be honest with you,” Meer told Bloomberg TV. “Of course, it will have an impact on our supply chain, on our cargo operation.”



Badr al-Meer

The CEO’s comments underpin the tough situation that airlines and planemakers face after President Donald Trump unveiled tariffs with most US trading partners. Airlines are already grappling with higher prices for spare parts and face the specter of tariffs on new aircraft. Travel demand is meanwhile weakening in the US and elsewhere, as passengers absorb the financial hit in the form

of rising consumer prices and slumping stock portfolios.

Meer said the airline continues to enjoy strong sales on its US routes despite the uncertainty stoked by Trump’s policies, with the trend set to continue in coming months. That sentiment has been echoed by Emirates, the world’s largest long-haul airline, which also said this week that it’s not experienced a slowdown.

Conversely, carriers including Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd have said that they’ve noticed some drop-off on routes across the Atlantic. American Airlines Group on Thursday withdrew its full-year earnings outlook, saying that unease about the economy is making it difficult to forecast how the year will play out.

Meer said that even if costs rise for Qatar Airways, it won’t

pass these on in form of higher ticket prices to customers. The carrier already faces additional costs due to a diverse fleet that includes both Boeing Co and Airbus SE aircraft, adding complexity in areas like maintenance or training. Meer hinted at a possible focus on just Airbus A320-family aircraft for the single-aisle fleet, meaning that the Boeing 737 planes on lease would be phased out.

Trade tensions dragging global economy towards recession: UN

Geneva, Switzerland – Global growth is forecast to slow to 2.3% in 2025, slipping below the 2.5% threshold often associated with a global recession, the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in its latest report. This marks a sharp deceleration compared to already sluggish pre-pandemic growth rates.

UNCTAD warns that rising uncertainty is weighing heavily on the global economy. Trade tensions are escalating, with recent tariff hikes undermining predictability. Rising fragmentation, if left unchecked, could deepen the downturn.

Trade turbulence intensifies amid policy uncertainty

According to UNCTAD, trade policy uncertainty, now at historic highs, is eroding business confidence and reshaping global trade patterns. Manufacturers and investors are delaying decisions, reassessing supply chain strategies and stepping up risk management efforts.

After a temporary surge at the end of 2024, merchandise trade momentum is fading, with the Shanghai Containerized Freight Index dropping by 40% between January and March 2025, falling back to pre-pandemic levels.

Record-high economic policy uncertainty is also fuelling financial turbulence. In early 2025, the Economic Policy Uncertainty Index reached its highest level this century, surpassing peaks during the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In early April, markets saw



Trade policy uncertainty, now at historic highs, is eroding business confidence and reshaping global trade patterns

UNCTAD expects global economic growth to slow to 2.3% this year as trade and economic policy uncertainty erode business and investor confidence

sharp corrections and heavy losses after weeks of volatility. The so-called financial “fear index” – a gauge of US stock market volatility – reached its third-highest level on record, behind only the peaks seen during the pandemic and global financial crisis

Heightened uncertainty is pushing up bond yields, reflected in a rising “term premium” – extra compensation investors demand for holding long-term debt. ‘This is raising financing

costs for governments, households and firms, putting further upward pressure on global interest rates and complicating prospects for developing economies,’ UNCTAD said in its report.

Developing economies face ‘perfect storm’

The slowdown will affect all economies, but UNCTAD highlights particular risks for developing countries. Many low-income

economies face a “perfect storm” of tighter financial conditions, high external debt and weakening domestic growth. More than half of low-income countries – 35 out of 68 – are now in debt distress or at high risk, according to the International Monetary Fund.

‘Persistently high bond yields in advanced economies, alongside tighter US monetary policy, are expected to crowd out financial flows to developing countries. Investor caution is redirecting capital toward assets and markets perceived as safer, further straining financing for the Global South,’ the report said.

Regional integration offers a buffer

UNCTAD noted that despite the

headwinds, opportunities exist. Trade among developing countries – also known as South-South trade – is expanding faster than other trade flows and now accounts for about one third of global trade.

In East and South-East Asia, intraregional trade has been a major force behind economic growth, with the region contributing over 40% of global growth in 2024.

UNCTAD’s report calls for stronger regional integration, renewed multilateral cooperation and a rebalancing of fiscal priorities toward sustainable infrastructure, social protection and climate action. Coordinated action, it said, will be essential to restore confidence and keep development on track.



US President Donald Trump

Trump says tariffs deal with Japan ‘very close’ to completion

Tokyo, Japan – US President Donald Trump said that the United States is “very close” to a deal with Japan as the two countries continue talks over US tariffs.

His remarks came as Ryo-sei Akazawa, Japan’s chief representative in tariff negotiations with the US administration, is set to make a three-day trip to Washington from Wednesday for a second round of talks.

Akazawa has requested the United States reconsider duties that have hit various exports, including those from the nation’s large automobile industry.

“I’m getting along very well with Japan. We’re very close to a deal,” Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday, though he did not elaborate further.

Trump is said to be viewing tariff talks with Japan, a major trade partner and key security ally, as a top priority, and the process is being considered a test case for other countries

also seeking relief from wide-ranging US tariffs.

Pitching tariffs as a means to reduce massive US trade deficits and to address what he views as unfair trade practices, Trump imposed higher import duties on cars, steel and aluminium following his return to the White House in January.

Japan also faces a 24% so-called reciprocal tariff – a 10% universal duty and a country-specific rate of 14%. The targeted tariff, also announced for dozens of other US trading partners in early April, was quickly put on hold in the wake of volatility in financial markets, particularly the bond market.

According to Reuters, the Office of the US Trade Representative said on Friday that it is “constantly engaged” with Japan and other countries on alternative reciprocal trade arrangements that could eliminate or reduce the current universal 10% tariff.

ZKyodo News

Fed could cut interest rates in June if economic data weakens

Diccon Hyatt

The US Federal Reserve is in “wait and see” mode for now, but several Fed officials indicated last week that the central bank could cut rates as early as June if the economic data worsens.

In an interview on CNBC Thursday, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland President Beth Hammack said the Fed could cut interest rates as soon as June if the economy shows signs of deteriorating under President Donald Trump’s on-again, off-again tariffs.

“If we have convincing data by June, then I think you’ll see the committee move if we know which way to move at that point,” Hammack said.

Another official, Fed Governor Christopher Waller, told Bloomberg Television he could see the central bank cutting interest rates if the labour market fell apart, but he didn’t expect that to happen until at least July.

“It wouldn’t surprise me that you might start seeing more layoffs, a tick up in the unemployment rate going forward if the big tariffs in particular come back on,” Waller said Thursday. “I would expect more rate cuts, and



US Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC

President Donald Trump’s trade wars could push up inflation and hurt employment simultaneously, creating a dilemma for the Fed’s monetary policy

sooner, once I started seeing some serious deterioration in the labor market.”

The Fed officials’ comments highlighted the central bank’s current dilemma as it waits to see if there is significant economic fallout from Trump’s trade war.

The Fed’s job is to keep inflation and unemployment low. Its primary tool, the federal funds rate, influences borrowing costs for all kinds of loans. The Fed can boost the economy by lowering the rate or push down inflation by raising it. Economists say that Trump’s tariffs risk increasing in-

flation while hurting employment, leaving Fed officials to choose which problem to tackle first.

Lately, the Fed has been in a holding pattern, keeping the fed funds rate at above-average levels to snuff out the last embers of post-pandemic high inflation. As of March, the labor market was resilient, with low unemployment, and inflation was falling toward the Fed’s goal of a 2% annual rate, but officials are bracing for a turnaround on both fronts.

(Source: Investopedia.com)

California becomes world's fourth largest economy

Los Angeles – The US state California’s economy has overtaken Japan’s, becoming the world’s fourth-largest economy, Governor Gavin Newsom announced.

According to data from the IMF and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, California’s nominal GDP reached \$4.1tn in 2024, surpassing Japan’s

\$4.02tn.

California now ranks behind the US at \$29.18tn, China \$18.74tn and Germany \$4.65tn.

“California isn’t just keeping pace with the world – we’re setting the pace. Our economy is thriving because we invest in people, prioritise sustainability, and believe in the power of inno-

vation,” Newsom said in a statement on Thursday.

He said “our progress” is threatened by the “reckless” tariff policies of the Trump administration. “California’s economy powers the nation, and it must be protected,” the governor added.

In 2024, California’s econ-

omy grew by 6%, more than the US (5.3%), China (2.6%), and Germany (2.9%).

The 40-million-population state, a tech and entertainment industry hub, leads the US in manufacturing output and is the nation’s top agricultural producer.

Anadolu Agency



Gulf Mushroom Products Co. (S.A.O.G.)

REPORT ON MATERIAL EVENTS & SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR THE PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS ENDED ON 31 MARCH 2025

MATERIAL EVENTS

In the annual general meeting of the company held on 17 March 2025 the shareholders declared cash dividend of Twenty Omani Baiza per share.

MATERIAL CHANGES IN FIGURES

Sales – During the period the company achieved a sales turnover of RO 2.883 million compared to RO 2.911 million for the same period last year, a decrease of about 1%.

Gross Profit – During the period the company made a Gross Profit of RO 1.433 million compared to a Gross Profit of RO 1.499 million for the same period last year, a decrease of about 4%.

Selling & Distribution Expenses – During the period the company incurred RO 208,000 as Selling & distribution expenses compared to RO 212,000 for the same period last year, a decrease of about 2%.

General & Administration Expenses – During the period the company incurred RO 353,000 as General & administration expenses compared to RO 345,000 for the same period last year, an increase of about 2%.

Profit before tax – During the period the company earned Profit before tax of RO 659,000 compared to Profit before tax of RO 708,000 for the same period last year, a decrease of about 7%.

Income tax – During the period Company provided Income tax of RO 100,000 compared to RO 107,000 provided for the same period last year, a decrease of about 7%.

Profit after tax – During the period company earned a profit after tax of RO 559,000 compared to profit after tax of RO 602,000 for the same period last year, a decrease of about 7% for above reasons.

Chief Executive Officer

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025

	31/03/2025 RO	31/03/2024 RO
Non-current sssets	13,792,688	13,836,582
Current assets		
Inventories	1,750,281	1,594,021
Receivables & Prepayments	2,196,133	2,138,769
Bank and Cash	601,420	332,289
Total current assets	4,547,834	4,065,079
Total assets	18,340,522	17,901,661
Current liabilities		
Bank overdraft/Wakala	809,505	682,200
Term loans	744,200	852,674
Trade & Other creditors	1,205,892	1,150,100
Lease liability	-	7,755
Taxation	396,688	295,357
Total current liabilities	3,156,285	2,988,086
Non-current liabilities		
Term loans	2,857,683	3,669,379
Deferred Tax	684,682	646,853
Lease liability	-	898
End of service benefits	596,283	540,136
Total non-current liabilities	4,138,648	4,857,266
Total liabilities	7,294,933	7,845,352
Net Assets	11,045,589	10,056,309
Shareholders' funds		
Share capital	4,576,580	4,576,580
Legal Reserve	1,425,686	1,235,227
Special Reserves	12,405	12,405
Revaluation Reserve	1,379,890	1,379,890
Accumulated Profit	3,651,028	2,852,207
Total shareholders' equity	11,045,589	10,056,309
Net assets per share (RO)	0.241	0.220

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income for three months ended 31 March 2025

	3 Months ended 31/03/2025 RO	3 Months ended 31/03/2024 RO
Turnover/Revenue	2,883,428	2,911,234
Direct Expenses	(1,450,310)	(1,412,092)
Selling & distribution expense	(207,640)	(211,836)
Indirect expenses	(352,966)	(344,569)
Other Income	1,425	114
Profit before depreciation & net financing costs	873,937	942,851
Depreciation	(155,962)	(169,709)
Profit before net financing costs	717,975	773,142
Net financing costs	(59,401)	(64,773)
Profit before tax	658,574	708,369
Income tax	(99,659)	(106,860)
Profit for the period	558,915	601,509
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	558,915	601,509
Profit per share (RO)	0.012	0.013

The complete accounts of Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG will be delivered to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of written request.

M/s Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG
P.O. Box: 383, Postal Code: 320, Barka, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 00968 26883955, Email: info@gulfmushroom.com

Omran to participate in ATM in Dubai

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) announces its participation in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025, which will take place from April 28 to May 1 in the city of Dubai.

The group will participate under the Sultanate of Oman's official pavilion, managed by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), alongside key tourism stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

Omran Group's participation reflects its ongoing efforts to support national initiatives aimed at expanding Oman's global tourism reach, strengthening partnerships, and attracting strategic investments that contribute to the growth of the sector, in collaboration with 'Visit Oman'. Through its diverse portfolio of integrated destinations, world-class hospitality assets, and sustainable tourism developments, Omran Group continues to play a vital role in advancing projects that align with the National Tourism Strategy and the broader goals of economic diversification.

Commenting on the Group's participation, Hashil Obaid al Mahrouqi, Chief Executive Officer of Omran Group, said: "Our presence at Arabian Travel Market underscores Omran's com-



mitment to supporting the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in showcasing Oman as a promising and competitive tourism destination. ATM serves as a global

platform to present our key initiatives and hospitality assets while engaging with international stakeholders to explore collaborative opportunities that con-

tribute to Oman's tourism growth story."

The event also provides Omran Group with the opportunity to engage with global

tourism professionals and industry leaders, gaining valuable insights into emerging trends, innovations, and best practices in tourism development.

Omran Group's participation in ATM 2025 supports the broader objective of enhancing Oman's visibility and appeal in international tourism markets. It

offers a platform for the Group to reaffirm its commitment to collaborative efforts that advance the national tourism agenda, while contributing to shaping informed, forward-looking conversations with global stakeholders.

Omran Group is committed to creating sustainable and authentic tourism projects, residential communities, and destinations. These initiatives are key in driving economic growth and supporting the diversification of Oman's economy.

The Group's multifaceted and collaborative approach enables it to work independently or as a catalyst, combining governmental strength with private sector innovation.

Omran Group's partnerships span various stakeholders, including government bodies, private entities, local communities, SMEs, and more. This collaborative approach ensures its initiatives positively impact the environment, social fabric, and local economy while preserving Oman's rich cultural heritage and environmental values.

Inspired by Oman's stunning beauty, peaceful harmony, and gracious hospitality, Omran Group endeavours to share these treasures globally, thus enriching the country's vibrant tapestry of experiences and opportunities.



Bank Muscat participates in book fair

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, has announced its strong support for the 29th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair, which is being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre until May 3.

This year's fair was inaugurated under the patronage of H H Sayyid Dr Fahad bin al Julanda al Said, Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University.

The exhibition reinforces its role as a key cultural event in the sultanate, striving to enhance community awareness and foster a vibrant cultural movement. This annual gathering ignites interest in reading, offering visitors access to the latest cultural publications and books from local, regional and international publishers.

This year's festival is experiencing a positive visitor turnout, focused on enriching Omani culture through a variety of events, lectures, and seminars. With participation from 35 countries, the fair showcases over half a million titles from more than 600 publishing houses, including 27,464 Omani publications. The fair also includes a Children's Corner where an area has been allocated for family activities, a theatre, reading corners and cultural workshops.

Notably, North Sharqiyah governorate is this year's guest of honour, emphasising its signif-

icant social and cultural contribution while highlighting its rich historical features.

As part of its participation, Bank Muscat will host a live interaction workshop on May 3 from 1pm to 2pm, focusing on financial literacy through the 'Maliyat Academy' initiative and Maliyat Platform.

The workshop will feature a Q&A segment to encourage visitor engagement. This topic was selected to highlight the importance of financial literacy as a vital tool for empowerment in a rapidly evolving world. This initiative aligns with the bank's broader strategy to enhance financial awareness and deliver innovative banking solutions that promote financial inclusion and foster a financially literate and stable society.

The bank is committed to strengthening partnership with governmental, private and non-governmental organisations to effectively organise events and initiatives that promote sustainable development across various sectors in the sultanate. Through its active participation in social and cultural activities, Bank Muscat deepens its commitment to this cause. The bank actively collaborates with organisers in order to maximise the achievements of the exhibition, showcasing the richness of Oman's cultural heritage to an increasingly diverse audience.

BankDhofar's ladies account offers exclusive services

Designed to cater to the needs of Omani and expatriate women across the sultanate, BankDhofar's Ladies Account continues to offer a wide range of financial and lifestyle benefits. It boasts improved benefits including, a higher interest rate on high yield accounts, and exclusive merchant offers.

The key feature of the enhanced offering is the visually distinctive new vertical purple debit card, providing a modern and personalised way for Ladies Account holders to manage their finances. Additionally, account holders benefit from the preferential high yield interest rates of up to 4.15% on savings, allowing customers to grow their wealth while maintaining easy access to their funds.

Additionally, the bank recently launched an exclusive



credit card, offering a range of services such as exemption from annual fees for the first year, and benefiting from exclusive rewards through the reward points

programme that can be redeemed through the mobile banking application or website. In addition, BankDhofar's Ladies credit card also offers, un-

limited airport lounge access in Muscat, Salalah and Duqm, comprehensive travel and purchase protection, and global acceptance in millions of locations across the world.

Commenting on the significance of the account, Amjad al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer of BankDhofar said, "BankDhofar has long been dedicated to serving the specific financial needs of women in Oman through the Ladies Account. Introduction of the exclusive vertical purple debit card, alongside other enhanced benefits, underscores our ongoing commitment to this important segment."

The account is open to female Omani nationals and expatriates aged 23 years or above, with the minimum age of 18 years for those who have their salary assigned to BankDhofar.

The bank's strategy is centred on providing an exceptional and unique experience to customers through distinctive and exclusive services and offers, and deepening existing relationships and retaining them. The bank anchors on relationship banking growth oriented model built on customer centricity, accountability, collaboration, performance driven.

BankDhofar's extensive branch network of 131 branches, including Dhofar Islamic across Sultanate of Oman ensures convenient access for all customers. The bank also provides comprehensive mobile banking services, including bill payments (mobile and utility), cardless cash withdrawals, and Dhofar Pay, Apple Pay, and Samsung Pay activation, facilitating seamless and secure financial management.

Tales of Morocco: A Moroccan culinary week with Chef Mansour Benali at Shangri-La Al Husn

Shangri-La Al Husn is entertaining guests on a mesmerising journey through the heart of Morocco with Tales of Morocco, a vibrant week-long culinary experience that began on April 23 to celebrate the kingdom's rich flavours, traditions - and the captivating art of belly dancing.

At the heart of this exclusive pop-up is Chef Mansour Benali, a Casablanca native whose signature style blends the deep roots of Moroccan culinary heritage with contemporary finesse. Known for his soulful cooking and elegant presentations, Chef Mansour will showcase an exceptional array of Morocco's most cherished dishes - from tagines and fluffy couscous to smoky kebabs and delightful dessert.

Evenings come alive with the rhythmic charm of live belly dancing performances, adding a cultural sparkle to every dinner service. This immersive element transforms each evening into a true Moroccan celebration, echoing the spirit of traditional souks feasts, and festive gatherings.



Till May 1, guests will enjoy a specially curated set menu, featuring classic appetisers, soup, a choice of hearty mains - including Chef Mansour's signature lamb or chicken tagines - and the traditional 'Mincha' dessert, served with Moroccan mint tea

and cookies. The evening is designed to transport you - from the warm spices and rich aromas to live Moroccan entertainment, traditional performances, and captivating belly dancing, all set against the stunning backdrop of Shangri-La Al Husn.

This exclusive pop-up is available from 7pm to 10.30pm daily till May 1 and is open to guests aged 13 and above. With the spiced aromas, lively performances, and culinary artistry, Tales of Morocco promises a multi-sensory experience that's as unforgettable as it is delicious.



Chef Mansour Benali

Overlooking the majestic turquoise waters of the Gulf of Oman, Shangri-La Al Husn, Muscat is a relaxing, luxury cliff-top retreat in Muscat. As Oman's sole adults-only resort for guests aged 16 years and above, Shangri-La Al Husn caters to discerning travellers, offering a tranquil atmosphere and genuine, heartfelt Omani and Asian hospitality. The resort features 180 luxury rooms and suites, a private 100-metre beach cove, a cliff-top infinity pool and a premium collection of restaurants.



GCET and Australia's Curtin University sign strategic academic MoU in Muscat

To strengthen international academic cooperation and achieve academic excellence, the Global College of Engineering and Technology (GCET) has signed an academic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Curtin University in Australia.

As part of the college's commitment to developing the higher education sector and exchanging successful global experiences and expertise, the GCET also seeks to explore avenues for improvement and development across various fields in support of the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Curtin University is one of the most prestigious academic institutions, ranked first in Australia and second globally in the field of metallurgical and mining engineering. It also holds the 174th position worldwide according to the QS World University Rankings. The agreement was signed on Thursday (April 24) under the patronage of H E Professor Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, at the ministry's headquarters in Muscat.

The signing ceremony was attended by Professor Geoffrey Elliott, Dean of GCET; Dr Suleiman al Hasani, Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs and Resources at GCET; and a delegation from Curtin University led by Professor Xiaotian Zhang, Vice President for Global Affairs; accompanied by Nigel de Silva, Director of Transnational Education and Partnerships; and Professor Klaus Regenauer-Lieb, a global distinguished expert in energy and mining resources engineering.

This partnership establishes a strong foundation for cooperation between the two parties in higher education, development of academic programmes and joint degree offerings, joint scientific research, faculty and student exchanges, and fostering academic integration and sustainable development in Oman and the wider region.

The MoU facilitates the exchange of expertise to support GCET's aspirations and expand its academic and research presence in sectors such as energy, sustainability, digital innovation, and mining technologies.

In her opening speech, H E Prof Rahma al Mahrouqi praised the ambitious cooperation between the two institutions and emphasised the importance of strategic international partnerships in developing the higher education ecosystem in the sultanate.

She highlighted the role these collaborations play in empowering students, enhancing global education opportunities, and facilitating the exchange of expertise, talent, and best practices in the field.

Professor Geoffrey Elliott, Dean of GCET, reaffirmed the college's commitment to fostering joint cooperation with institutions at local, regional, and international levels. He stressed that such efforts align with the college's continuous strategy to enhance the educational experience for its students and contribute to the development of higher education in the sultanate.

He also highlighted GCET's dedication to supporting students, especially in academic and research fields, to develop their skills, competencies, and capabilities, ensuring their readiness to compete in the job market and seize the best opportunities, ultimately contributing to building Oman's future in line with national plans and future visions.

It is worth noting that GCET offers academic programmes and qualifications at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Engineering, Computing, Urban Planning, Cybersecurity, Environmental Management, and Technology. The college is committed to delivering a high-quality educational experience in line with international standards and evolving national and regional priorities, while pursuing academic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. It also focuses on graduating highly qualified professionals equipped to meet workforce needs and achieve strategic goals.

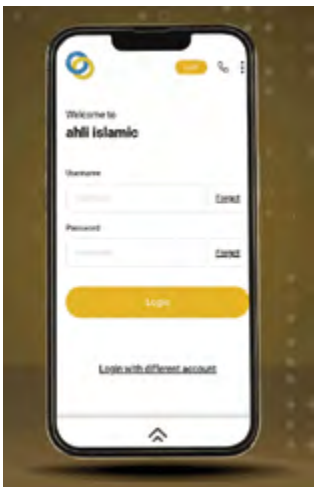
ahli islamic upgrades mobile banking app for better experience

In line with its commitment to provide its clients the latest, most intuitive solutions, ahli islamic, a pioneer in Islamic banking in the Sultanate of Oman, introduced its newly enhanced mobile banking app, designed to deliver an improved and seamless user experience.

Featuring a fully redesigned interface, the app offers a modern look and innate navigation, allowing customers to personalise their banking journey with customisable options. With enhanced payment and transfer capabilities, users can now pay multiple bills at once and access recent transactions effortlessly.

The revamped app reflects ahli islamic's commitment to innovation, ensuring greater convenience and efficiency.

Noora Sultan, AGM - Head of Retail Banking at ahli Islamic, said: "At ahli islamic, we recognize that digital transformation is integral to delivering a seamless



and modern banking experience. The newly enhanced mobile banking app, fashioned with an array of customizable options, offers a user-friendly experience tailored to individual preferences. Additionally, the enhanced payment and transfer capabilities allow customers to manage multiple transactions effortlessly, making everyday banking more efficient than ever."

MHD Automobiles brings Alfa Romeo experience within reach

MHD Automobiles, the exclusive distributor of Alfa Romeo in Oman, is proud to announce limited-time special pricing on select Alfa Romeo models. This exclusive offer presents a rare opportunity for automotive enthusiasts to own a piece of Italian performance and design excellence at exceptional value.

The Alfa Romeo Tonale Ti, a compact SUV blending everyday practicality with signature Italian flair, is now available from RO13,995. Built for urban living and inspired by Alfa Romeo's racing heritage, the Tonale is the perfect introduction to the brand.

The Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce, a sports sedan that strikes a perfect balance between elegance and athleticism, is now priced from RO18,995. With rear-wheel drive and a driver-centric cockpit, it offers a dynamic, engaging driving experience.

The Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce, known for its commanding road presence and precision handling, is now available from



RO21,995. Equipped with all-wheel drive, it delivers refined performance with confidence and comfort.

For enthusiasts seeking uncompromising performance, the Giulia Quadrifoglio delivers pure driving exhilaration with its 2.9L twin-turbocharged V6 engine - a true sports sedan starting from RO33,995. For those who desire the same racing DNA with the versatility of an SUV, the Stelvio Quadrifoglio combines commanding road presence with precision handling, starting from RO36,995.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles LLC, said, "Alfa Romeo is more than a brand - it's a symbol of passion, performance, and timeless design. With these special prices, we're inviting more customers in Oman to experience the thrill and prestige of Alfa Romeo ownership."

MHD Automobiles is the authorised distributor of Jeep, Dodge, RAM, and Alfa Romeo in Oman. MHD Automobiles is redefining the driving experience in the sultanate.

Omantel Innovation Labs unveils 7 startups for Cohort 5

Omantel Innovation Labs proudly unveils the seven Omani startups chosen to join the fifth cohort of its prestigious Omantel Accelerator programme.

This announcement marks a significant milestone in the Labs' ongoing mission to drive technological innovation and entrepreneurship within the Sultanate of Oman.

The selected startups underwent rigorous evaluation through bootcamps and in-depth interviews with industry experts, resulting in the selection of seven standout ventures. Each of these startups is pioneering innovation in cutting-edge fields, including AI, cybersecurity, and sustainability, and will receive tailored support to fast-track their success.

Ghada al Said, Senior Manager of Omantel Innovation Labs, said, "Congratulations to these remarkable startups for being selected as part of the Omantel Accelerator programme. The selection process was intensive, and each of these startups has demonstrated the strength of their foundation by making it through. We are looking forward to working closely with them over the next few months to accelerate their solutions and provide them with some of the best international and local mentorship."

Sohar International 'Bank of the Year in Digital Innovation'

In recognition of its outstanding contributions to advancing digital banking through the use of cutting-edge technology to enhance customer experience, streamline operations, and drive transformation across its services, Sohar International was honoured with the prestigious 'Bank of the Year in Digital Innovation' Award at the DLive Awards 2025.

The accolade was presented during the exclusive DLive Conference, organised by Muscat Media Group at the JW Marriott

Hotel, OCEC, Muscat.

Under the compelling theme 'The Next in Digital Innovation', the event brought together more than 150 influential C-level executives, government dignitaries, technology innovators, industry specialists, and digital transformation professionals.

Ahmed bin Jaafar al Musalmi, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, graced the occasion as Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address. Representing Sohar International at the ceremony were Khalil Salim al



Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer; and Sajael Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer; reflecting the bank's unwavering commitment to transformative digital solutions within Oman's banking sector.

Commenting on this significant achievement, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said, "This recognition highlights Sohar International's strategic commitment to digital innovation - integrated across every function of our organisation. We

strive to anticipate evolving customer expectations and respond with intelligent, user-centric solutions that drive both efficiency and experience.

"By embedding advanced digital capabilities into our framework, we've fostered a culture of continuous improvement and agility. Our transformation journey extends beyond systems and platforms; it delivers tangible impact for individuals, businesses, and society at large, while contributing meaningfully to Oman's economic development."

China claims it took control of disputed reef in South China Sea

Beijing, China - China has said it took control of a disputed reef near a major Philippines military outpost in the South China Sea, according to state media.

China has 'enforced maritime management and exercised sovereign jurisdiction' over an uninhabited reef in the disputed South China Sea, the state broadcaster CCTV reported on Saturday.

Images released by the broadcaster showed China Coast Guard officers unfurling the flag as part of an effort to effectively seize Sandy Cay reef, which Beijing calls Tiexian Jiao, earlier this month.

The reef is also claimed by Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

CCTV said the coast guard landed 'on Tiexian Jiao to exercise sovereignty and jurisdiction' over the reef, carry out an 'inspection', and 'collect video evidence regarding the illegal activities of the Philippines side'.

The move came when the Philippines is currently taking part in joint military drills with the US that Beijing has slammed as 'destabilising'.

Citing an unnamed Philippines maritime official, *The Financial Times* reported that the Chinese Coast Guard had left after unfurling the flag, suggesting that it was not a permanent seizure.

China and the Philippines have been locked in a months-long confrontation over the contested waters, accusing each other of causing ecological degradation of several disputed



landforms in the South China Sea.

Both sides have claims in the South China Sea, with Beijing asserting control over nearly the entire region.

The Philippines, meanwhile, had said on Thursday that two Chinese warships, led by the Shandong aircraft carrier, sailed on Tuesday near its northern maritime borders.

Shandong was deployed to the disputed South China Sea for a second time in April, ac-

cording to the US Naval Institute (USNI).

"The Philippine Navy, through its intelligence surveillance reconnaissance capabilities, monitored 2 PLA Navy ships off our Northern coasts last April 22, 2025," Navy spokesman Capt. John Percie Alcos told reporters after he was asked about the USNI report, reported the Inquirer.

The Philippines' military drills with the US is named the 'Super Bowl' of exercises in the region, the three-week 'Balikatan', or 'shoulder to shoulder' drills, which are being attended by more than 16,000 troops from both sides.

Balikatan 25 is taking place till May 9 in the Luzon Strait, between the Philippines Luzon island and Taiwan.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang had urged the US to abandon its 'persecutory delusion' about the Chinese military after US officials commented about China's military, according to state-run Xinhua News.

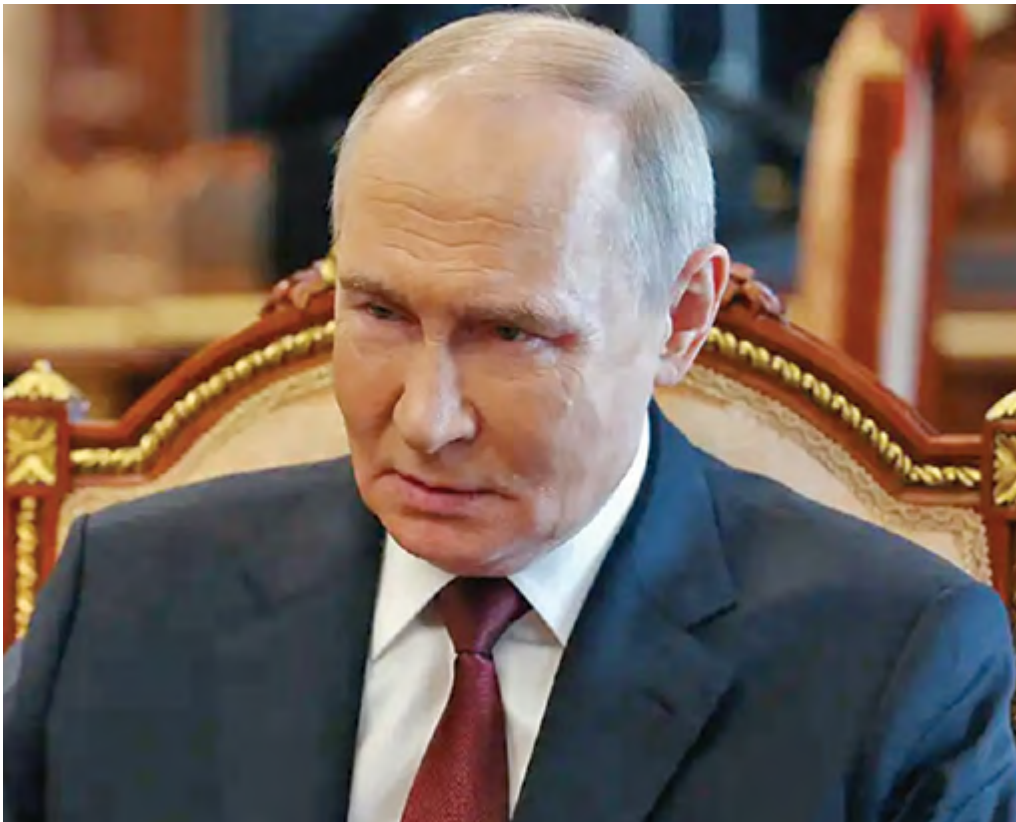
"We have a sober understanding of our own development and hope that the US side will cast away its 'persecutory delusion' and stop using others as excuses," he said.

"Some people in the US always view the Chinese military through tinted glasses of bias, cooking up the so-called 'Chinese military threat'. I believe this is precisely what obstructs exchanges between the two countries' militaries," Zhang added.

Anadolu Agency

N Korean troops took part in war against Ukraine: Moscow

Russia, for the first time admitted that North Korean troops took part in its war against Ukraine, said media outlets



Putin has claimed that his country has regained control of Kursk, the border region

However, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said in a Telegram post that Putin's claim about the end of hostilities in Kursk was 'not true'.

"The defensive operation of the Ukrainian Defence Forces in the designated areas in Kursk region continues. The operational situation is difficult, but our units continue to hold their positions and perform their assigned tasks," the Telegram post said as per a report in the CNN.

The report by the US news outlet said that Ukraine launched its shock incursion into Kursk in August, swiftly capturing territory in what was the first ground invasion of Russia by a foreign power since World War II.

Meanwhile, there was a brief meeting on Saturday morning between Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Donald Trump at the funeral of the late Pope Francis in the Vatican.

A White House spokesperson described the meeting as 'productive', while Zelensky thanked Trump for the meeting, writing on X that it 'has the potential to become historic, if we achieve joint results'.

Later on Saturday, Trumo raised the prospect of applying new sanctions on Russia for launching a deadly wave of attacks on Kyiv last week.

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social.

ANI

Russia's Chief of General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, noted on Saturday in a video conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin that North Korean troops had played a crucial role in the liberation of the Kursk border region, according to South Korean news agency Yonhap

Kursk border area creates conditions for further successful actions of the Russian troops in other important areas of the front and 'brings closer the defeat of the neo-Nazi regime'.

The Russian president congratulated and thanked the servicemen of the military units that took part in the liberation of the region, as per state media TASS.

Russia's acknowledgement of North Korean troops comes almost a year after the US, South Korea, UK, and Ukraine stated that North Korean troops were seen at the frontlines of the war.

a transcript of the videoconference posted on the website of the Kremlin.

Putin has claimed that his country has regained control of

Kursk, the border region where Ukraine launched a surprise offensive last year.

According to Putin, the complete defeat of the enemy in the



3 US citizen kids deported along with mothers

Washington, D.C., US - Three US citizen children, ages 2, 4, and 7, were deported from Louisiana early on Friday morning alongside their mothers, *The Washington Post* reported on Saturday, citing their lawyers.

Lawyers for the families said both groups were taken into custody in New Orleans and transferred to Louisiana, where they were denied communication with relatives and legal counsel before being put on a flight to Honduras.

The four-year-old suffers from Stage 4 cancer and was removed without medication or doctor contact, the family's lawyer said.

Attorneys representing the father of the two-year-old US citizen filed an emergency petition in the Western District of Louisiana on Thursday seeking the child's release.

However, the deportation proceeded before the court opened the following morning, the news outlet said. Hours later, US District Judge Terry A

Doughty expressed concern, saying it is 'illegal and unconstitutional' to deport US citizens.

Justice Department lawyers submitted a note allegedly written by the two-year-old's mother stating she was voluntarily taking the child to Honduras.

The Donald Trump administration, which has consistently criticised the previous administration's border policies and implemented strict immigration enforcement since taking office, claims its deportation operations target illegal immigrants, criminals, and gang members. However, the accelerated processes have resulted in several errors.

Trump defended the approach on Truth Social on Saturday, stating: "It is not possible to have trials for millions and millions of people." Previously, the US government acknowledged that a person named Abrego Garcia was wrongly deported to a mega-jail in El Salvador due to an 'administrative error'.

Anadolu Agency

Several killed as vehicle plows into Vancouver street festival crowd

Vancouver, Canada - Several people were killed and multiple others injured after a vehicle drove into a crowd attending a street festival in Vancouver on Saturday evening, police said, as per reports by CBC News.

The incident occurred shortly after 8am near East 41st Avenue and Fraser Street, where the Lapu Lapu Day Block Party was underway. Vancouver police confirmed that the driver involved is in custody and emphasised that the incident was not a hit-and-run.

In a post on X, the Vancouver Police Department said: "A number of people have been killed and multiple others are injured after a driver drove into a crowd at a street festival at E. 41st Avenue and Fraser shortly after 8am tonight. The driver is in custody. We will provide more

information as the investigation unfolds."

Authorities said further details would be shared as the investigation progresses. Videos posted on social media earlier in the evening showed emergency crews attending to several people lying on the ground, with some appearing seriously injured.

CBC News has contacted the Vancouver Police Department for additional updates. Meanwhile, political leaders expressed their shock and condolences over the tragedy. The NDP, which had held a campaign event at the festival earlier in the day, reacted swiftly, reported CBC News.

In a statement posted on X, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said he was 'horrified to learn of an incident at Vancouver's Lapu Lapu



Day celebrations that injured and killed innocent people', adding that his thoughts were with the victims, their families, and Vancouver's Filipino community 'who were coming together today to celebrate resilience'.

Vancouver Mayor Ken Sim also released a statement, saying he was 'shocked and deeply saddened' by what he described as a 'horrific incident' at the festival.

"Our thoughts are with all those affected and with Vancouver's Filipino community during this

incredibly difficult time," he said.

British Columbia Premier David Eby expressed similar sentiments, posting on X that he was 'shocked and heartbroken' to learn of the lives lost and the injuries sustained at the celebration. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre also reacted, saying he was 'shocked' by the 'horrific news' and thanked first responders for their efforts at the scene, while offering support to the Filipino community and all those affected.

The Lapu Lapu Day event, held for the second consecutive year in Vancouver, commemorates Lapu Lapu, an Indigenous resistance leader in the Philippines who fought against Spanish colonisation in the 16th century, CBC News reported.

Organisers had described the event as an opportunity to honour Filipino heritage and celebrate the enduring spirit of bayanihan - the tradition of collective community effort.

ANI

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Iran port blast: Toll rises to 25

Tehran, Iran - The number of people killed in the explosion that rocked a major port in southern Iran has risen to 25 as of Sunday, according to Iranian state news agency IRNA.

More than 700 people were injured in the blast, according to the report, and firefighters were still at the scene to extinguish the fire, but were nearly done with 80% as of Sunday, state TV quoted Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni as saying.

The port, located in Hormozgan province more than 1,000km (620 miles) south of the capital, Tehran, is Iran's largest commercial port.

Local media have reported that the port handles around half of Iran's total trade and around 85-90% of all container traffic.

State TV added that the port had resumed some operations.

What happened at the port?

Saturday's explosion was so powerful that people heard and felt it up to 50km (30 miles) away, the state-run Fars news agency reported.

According to the semi-official Tasnim news agency, the shock wave from the explosion caused severe damage to most buildings at the port.

State TV said hundreds of casualties had been taken to 'nearby medical centres'.

It also reported that schools



Health authorities have warned residents to remain indoors if possible amid severe air pollution

A huge blast at a major port in Iran killed 25 people and injured more than 700, according to state media. Initial reports say that explosion may have been sparked by chemicals stored at the port

and offices in the nearby provincial capital of Bandar Abbas had been ordered to remain closed on Sunday amid high levels of air pollution from chemicals such as ammonia, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.

The Health Ministry has urged residents to avoid going outside 'until further notice' and to use protective masks. Saturday is the start of the working week in Iran, which means the port was likely filled with workers

when the blast occurred.

Cause of the explosion

Although authorities have not announced any cause of the explosion, various initial reports

point to the possible involvement of inflammable chemicals stored at the port.

State TV carried a statement by the port's customs office saying that the blast may have been ignited by a fire in the hazardous and chemical materials storage depot.

The New York Times quoted a source with ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, who spoke on condition of anonymity,

as saying sodium perchlorate - a key ingredient in solid fuel for missiles - could have been what blew up.

The Associated Press news agency reported that the blast may have occurred because the chemical may have been improperly stored.

There is no other confirmation about the kind of chemical that may have set off the blast.

DW

Israeli army extends compulsory military service

Jerusalem - The Israeli army extended compulsory military service by four months amid a manpower shortage, local media said on Sunday.

According to the daily Yedioth Ahronoth, soldiers will serve an additional four months to a full three-year term.

The army also decided to suspend pre-release leaves, requiring soldiers to serve a full three years before discharge.

There was no immediate confirmation from the army of the report.

The newspaper said the decision was taken to address an unprecedented manpower shortage as the army is now short of 10,000 troops, 7,000 of them in combat units.

The Israeli government had attempted to pass legislation extending compulsory service to three years from the current two years and eight months, but the move faced opposition from ultra-Orthodox members of the coalition.

Anadolu Agency

Houthis claim second strike on Israel's Nevatim Airbase

Istanbul, Turkey - Yemen's Houthi group announced on Sunday that it had targeted Israel's Nevatim Airbase with a hypersonic ballistic missile.

In a televised statement, Yahya Saree, the military spokesperson for the Houthi forces, claimed that the strike 'achieved its objective successfully'. The Israeli army announced its air defence systems intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered Israeli airspace, triggering sirens in several areas.

This marks the second time in 24 hours that the Houthis say they have struck the Nevatim Airbase. On Saturday morning, the group announced it had fired a hypersonic ballistic missile at the same site, also claiming a successful hit.

The Houthis have targeted ships passing through the Red and Arabian seas, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden since November 2023 in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The group halted attacks



when a ceasefire in Gaza was declared in January between Israel and the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, but resumed them after Israel renewed airstrikes on the enclave last month.

Meanwhile, Houthis have shot down at least seven multi-million-dollar American drones over the last six weeks, hindering US military objectives in the region, CNN reported, citing multiple US officials. The downing of these drones, including MQ9 Reapers, has prevented the US from achieving its goal of air superiority over Yemen within 30 days,

officials told CNN. This setback has complicated American efforts to move into 'phase two' of its military operation.

According to the officials, Houthi forces have launched 77 one-way attack drones, 30 cruise missiles, 24 medium-range ballistic missiles, and 23 surface-to-air missiles targeting US forces, the Red Sea, or Israel over the last six weeks. The financial burden of the US campaign continues to mount, with costs reaching nearly US\$1bn in just the first three weeks.

Anadolu Agency

Gaza death toll surges to over 52,200

Gaza City/Ankara - At least 52,243 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Sunday.

A ministry statement said that 51 people were killed in Israeli attacks in the enclave in the last 24 hours, while 115 others were injured, taking the number of injuries to 117,639 in the Israeli onslaught.

"Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

The ministry said that the names of 697 people have also been added to the registry after their data had been completed and approved.

The Israeli army resumed its assaults on the Gaza Strip on March 18 and has since killed 2,151 people and injured 5,598 others, shattering a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

Collapsed economy

The Gaza economy has collapsed with prices of essential goods skyrocketing by 527% amid an Israeli blockade on the enclave, the Gaza Chamber of Commerce



and Industry said on Sunday.

"(The Israeli) occupation continues to prevent the entry of trucks of the private sector, causing almost a complete paralysis (of the economy)," the chamber said in a statement.

According to the statement, prices of essential goods and foodstuffs rose by 527% after Israel blocked the entry of supplies and humanitarian aid into the territory.

Gaza 'is facing a catastrophic collapse of the economic system' due to the years-long Israeli

blockade, the chamber said.

Since March 2, Israel has kept Gaza's crossings closed to food, medical, and humanitarian aid, deepening an already humanitarian crisis, according to government, human rights, and international reports.

The territory has already been under a crippling Israeli siege since 2007, badly affecting livelihood in the strip.

Deepening hunger

Food stocks have run out in the war-torn Gaza Strip, deepening

hunger in the Palestinian enclave amid Israel's destructive war, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Sunday.

"Hunger is deepening in Gaza," UNRWA said in a statement. "People, including many children, are hoping to get some food to survive during a warm meal distribution by charitable organisations."

The refugee agency said that its flour supplies in the enclave have run out this week.

Anadolu Agency

France: Police step up manhunt after fatal stabbing inside mosque

Paris, France - Police in southern France are continuing to search for a suspect in the fatal stabbing of a Muslim worshipper inside a mosque.

Authorities say they believe Friday's killing could have been an Islamophobic crime.

Authorities said a man in his 20s stabbed the worshipper dozens of times at the building in the village of La Grand-Combe, north of Montpellier.

Le Parisien newspaper cited an investigative source as saying the attacker then filmed the victim, who was in his early to mid-20s, with his mobile phone as he lay dying.

The video was sent to a friend who then posted it online before deleting it, according to

French media reports.

Surveillance cameras at the mosque also captured the attack, which showed the attacker and victim alone in the Mosque.

The body was not found until mid-morning.

French media said the victim was a regular worshipper at the mosque. People told AFP news agency that he had arrived from Mali a few years ago and was 'very well-known' and highly regarded in the village. The killer had never been seen there before, investigators said.

Alleged perpetrator not caught yet

Regional prosecutor Abdelkrim Grini told AFP that the suspect was still at large as of Saturday.



French media said the victim was a regular worshipper at the mosque. People told AFP news agency that he had arrived from Mali a few years ago and was 'very well-known' and highly regarded

Describing the killing as possible Islamophobic crime, Grini said the French anti-terror prosecutors' office was considering whether to take over the case.

Another source told AFP that

the suspect has been identified as a French citizen of Bosnian origin who is not a Muslim.

During the attack, the man reportedly shouted insults.

Attacker will be caught: PM

French Prime Minister François Bayrou condemned the stabbing, describing it in a post on X late on Saturday as an 'Islamophobic atrocity'.

"We stand with the victim's loved ones and with the shocked believers," Bayrou wrote, emphasising that authorities are doing everything in their power to apprehend the perpetrator and bring him to justice.

DW

India: NIA teams intensify probe into Pahalgam attack, question witnesses

New Delhi, India - The National Investigation Agency (NIA) teams, stationed at the Pahalgam terror attack site since April 23, have intensified the search for evidence.

The teams, led by an IG, DIG, and SP from the anti-terror agency, are questioning eyewitnesses who observed the April 22 attack, which resulted in the deaths of 26 tourists, including one Nepali citizen, and left over three dozen others injured. The incident occurred around 2pm at Baisaran meadow, near the popular tourist town of Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The teams, overseen by an IG, a DIG and an SP from the anti-terror agency, are examining the eyewitnesses who had seen the horrifying attack unfold before their eyes at the peaceful and picturesque Baisaran valley. The eyewitnesses are being questioned in minute detail to piece together the sequence of events that led to one of the worst terror attacks in Kashmir," NIA said in a statement.

"The entry and exit points are being closely scrutinised by the investigating NIA teams for clues to the modus operandi of the terrorists. The teams, aided by forensic and other experts, are checking the entire area thoroughly for evidence to expose the terror conspiracy that led to the horrendous attack that has shocked the nation," NIA further said in the statement.



Entry and exit points are being closely scrutinised by the investigating NIA teams for clues to the modus operandi of the terrorists. While the forensic and other experts are conducting a thor-

ough search of the entire area for evidence to uncover the terror conspiracy behind the horrific attack that has shocked the nation. Also, the Indian Army is on high alert, launching several

search operations to neutralise the terrorists following the attack in Pahalgam. The incident has sparked nationwide outrage, with widespread protests erupting across the country.

Navy conducts missile firings
Meanwhile, the Indian Navy warships recently carried out multiple successful anti-ship missile firings, as per a statement by the

Indian Navy. Taking to the social media platform X, the spokesperson of the Indian Navy stated that the firings were done to revalidate and showcase the operational

readiness of platforms, systems, and crew for long-range precision offensive strikes. The exercise was aimed at demonstrating the Navy's combat readiness and its capability to safeguard India's maritime interests. The warships were deployed in the Arabian Sea. "Indian Navy Ships undertook successful multiple anti-ship firings to revalidate and demon-

The teams, led by an IG, DIG and SP from the anti-terror agency, are questioning eyewitnesses who observed the April 22 attack, which resulted in death of 26 tourists

strate readiness of platforms, systems and crew for long-range precision offensive strike. Indian Navy stands Combat Ready, Credible and Future Ready in safeguarding the nation's maritime interests Anytime Anywhere Anyhow," the post stated. Earlier, the Indian Navy's warship INS Surat carried out a successful test firing of the Medium range surface-to-air missile (MR-SAM) air defence missile system in the Arabian Sea. ANI

Trump urges free passage for US ships through Panama and Suez canals

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump on Saturday said that American vessels should travel through the Panama and Suez canals without paying fees, claiming that these strategic passages owe their existence to the US.

"American Ships, both Military and Commercial, should be allowed to travel, free of charge, through the Panama and Suez Canals," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

"Those Canals would not exist without the United States of America," the US president added, directing Secretary of State Marco Rubio to 'immediately take care of, and memorialise, this situation!'

National Security Advisor



Michael Waltz supported Trump's position regarding the Panama Canal, suggesting the

US 'shouldn't have to pay to use a canal' it built. The Panama Canal connects

the Atlantic and Pacific oceans through Panama, while the Suez Canal in Egypt links the

Mediterranean and Red seas, providing the shortest maritime route between Europe and the Indian and western Pacific oceans. Both canals charge substantial transit fees, potentially reaching hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on vessel size and cargo. The Trump administration has been working to reduce China's influence over the Panama Canal, which the US constructed over 120 years ago before transferring control to Panama in 1999. In February, Panama withdrew from China's Belt and Road Initiative following pressure from Washington and a visit by Rubio. Anadolu Agency



Climate change driving malaria surge in Pakistan, cautions WHO

Islamabad, Pakistan - The World Health Organisation (WHO) and Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services have sounded the alarm over a sharp rise in malaria cases across the country, linking the surge directly to the impacts of climate change, Dawn reported.

With more than two million cases reported annually, officials warned that intensified action is urgently needed to contain the growing threat to Pakistan and the wider region.

The warning was issued on the occasion of World Malaria Day, with both WHO and Pakistani authorities calling for a collective push to combat the disease. "Malaria is a major global threat, and we are seeing first-hand how climate change is increasing both the risk and the cases in our country," said Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal. He emphasised that ending malaria is not only a health priority, but also an investment in a safer, healthier, and equitable future for all nations.

Under the international theme 'Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite', WHO urged governments, organisations, and communities to

step up support for malaria elimination efforts. Pakistan's battle against malaria was severely impacted by the catastrophic 2022 floods, which triggered an additional 6.6mn cases over the 2022-2024 period, reported Dawn.

Cases peaked in 2023 at 2.7mn, a steep rise compared to 399,097 reported in 2021. Consequently, WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region saw malaria cases spike to an estimated 10.2mn in 2023, marking a 137 per cent increase since 2015.

Despite the surge, Pakistan has made notable progress over the past decade in malaria prevention and treatment. Working alongside WHO and with funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the country screened more than 11.4mn suspected cases and treated two million confirmed malaria patients in 2024 alone.

Pakistan also distributed 7.8mn insecticide-treated nets across 22 high-burden districts, which contributed to a decline in cases from 2.7mn in 2023 to two million last year. ANI

Australia's ruling party leads in elections

Canberra, Australia - Just days ahead of Australia's May 3 elections, the ruling Labor Party leads the opposition Coalition with incumbent Prime Minister Anthony Albanese considered the preferred choice for another term, the latest poll survey said on Sunday.

Albanese is leading Opposition Leader Peter Dutton by 53.3% to 46.5%, according to YouGov polling - a 0.5% increase from the 18 April poll - the local broadcaster SBS News reported.

Rwanda, DR Congo sign joint statement pledging towards peace deal by May 2

Yaounde, Cameroon - Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed a joint statement on Friday pledging to respect each other's sovereignty and draft a peace agreement by May 2 to end hostilities in conflict-torn eastern Congo, according to a media note released by the US Department of State.

DRC Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner and Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhugirehe signed the US-brokered agreement in Washington, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in attendance.

The joint declaration commits both nations to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, refrain from supporting

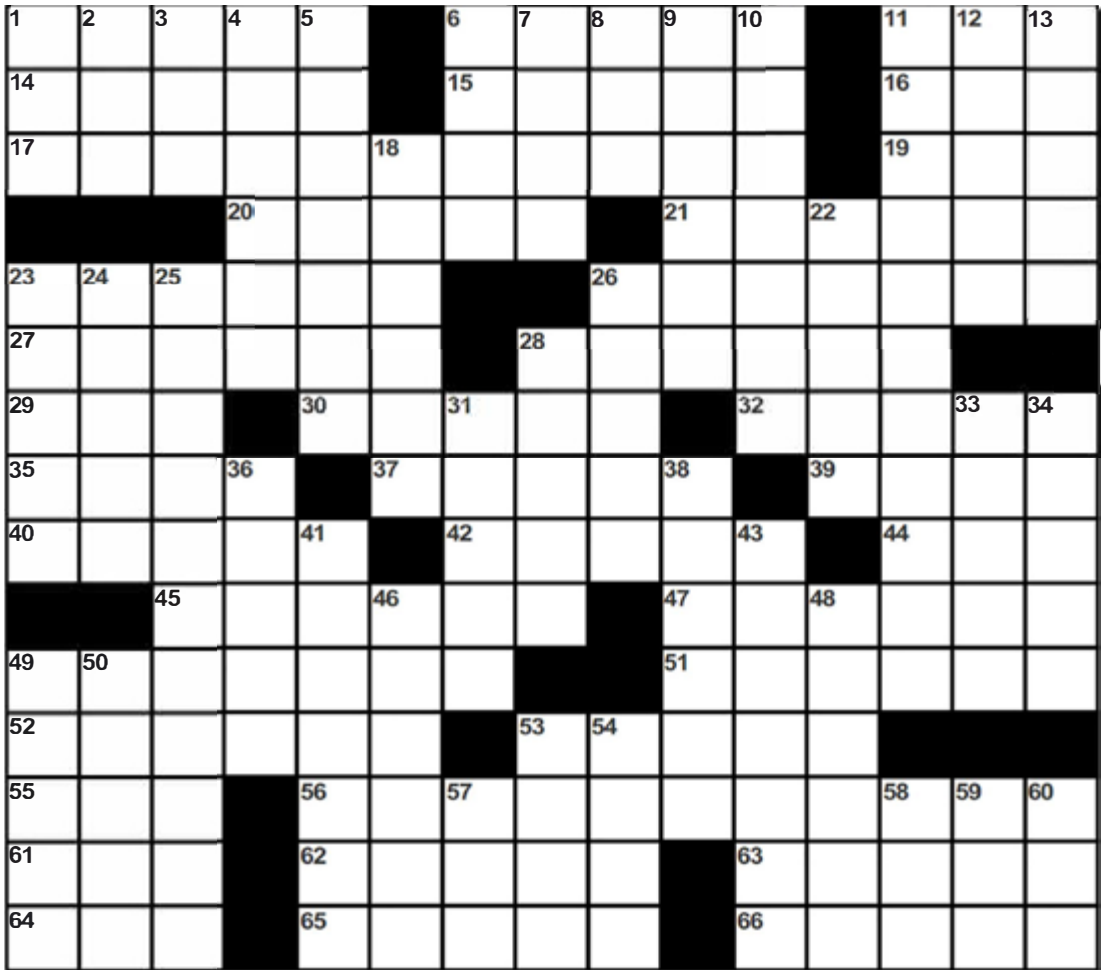


non-state armed groups, avoid interfering in each other's internal affairs, address security concerns through peaceful means, and establish a joint security mechanism to combat organised crime. The statement also outlined

plans for cooperation with the US on strategic projects, including the development of mineral value chains and hydropower. "Today marks not an end but a beginning, a necessary step towards peace taken with re-

solve and purpose," Wagner told a news conference after the signing. Nduhugirehe said the declaration 'opens the door to a definitive peace agreement, giving fresh impetus' to efforts toward lasting stability. Eastern Congo has been gripped by a security and humanitarian crisis since January, after the M23 rebel group launched a new offensive, capturing large swaths of North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. The DRC, along with the US and European Union, accuses Rwanda of backing the M23 rebels - an allegation Kigali strongly denies. Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Butcher's discards
 - 6) Vegetables in gumbo soup
 - 11) Four winter wks.
 - 14) Flared dress style
 - 15) Type of bench in front of keys
 - 16) No way to be conceived?
 - 17) Basic
 - 19) Regret bitterly
 - 20)_ out a living (barely making do)
 - 21) They walk on two feet
 - 23) Cause of many a split
 - 26) Moves back, as a hair-line
 - 27) Back somersault dive
 - 28) Dehumidifying gel
 - 29) Illumination unit
 - 30) Lopsided wins
 - 32) Some burial sites
 - 35) Small things in wallets
 - 37) Abnormal breath sounds
 - 39) "Nobody doesn't like_ Lee"
 - 40) Angler's boot
 - 42) Bob Marley was one
 - 44) Tom, Dick or Harry, e.g.
 - 45) Word with "free" or "travel"
 - 4 7) Painter of zaftig women Peter Paul
 - 49) Indian appetizers
 - 51) Familiar with
 - 52) Relative of "Skoal!"
 - 53) They bring tears to one's eyes
 - 55) Large flightless bird
 - 56) Certain fragrant pink flowers
 - 61) Day's end, in poems
 - 62) Related on the mother's side
 - 63) Word with spitting
 - 64) EPA-banned bug killer
 - 65) Grown dogie
 - 66) Tie for a dandy
- DOWN**
- 1) Clumsy goof
 - 2) Cold and_ season
 - 3) Shark sighting, often
 - 4) From the mountains of Peru
 - 5) Less likely to stay inflated
 - 6) Accepting customers
 - 7) Juan Carlos, for one
 - 8) "You dirty_!" (famous film line)
 - 9) Cornell's_ Taylor Hall
 - 10) Formally request
 - 11) Like some cheap sale goods
 - 12) Outwit, as a posse
 - 13) What God can do
 - 18) Medicine chest door, often
 - 22) River to the Rio Grande
 - 23) Beaming
 - 24) Flora's partner
 - 25) It cannot be negotiated
 - 26) Ascends
 - 28) Spread apart, as fingers
 - 31) Chagall and Anthony
 - 33) Main impact
 - 34) Ultimate authority
 - 36) Bell-shaped flowers
 - 38) Went on the offensive?
 - 41) Has a dwelling
 - 43) Vienna's country
 - 46) Floating on water
 - 48) Brooms of twigs
 - 49) Risk a ticket
 - 50) Holding one's piece?
 - 53) Item on a social schedule
 - 54) Friendly intro?
 - 57) "Diamond Lil" star
 - 58) Yolk_ (egg part)
 - 59) Bighead's problem
 - 60) Tennis match division

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Do you feel like you've been assigned an impossible project? It's your choice whether or not to accept it. Just because you've been asked nicely (or ordered), that doesn't mean you have to automatically say yes. Think it all over carefully and figure out how much of a hassle it will be and whether the long-term rewards are worth the short-term stress. If you still feel up to it, then by all means go for it!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today is the day to put your money where your mouth is. A few sacrifices (including some that are quite personal) may be necessary, but the rewards of turning your big ideas into real-world effects are totally worth it. You might just see such wonderfully tangible results that you decide to act on those good intentions more often. You can make a real difference where it really counts.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A romance can heat up or even rekindle when you least expect it. You may see it as a problem if your current mate or crush isn't exactly what you expected. This is a good thing, though! Where's the joy in life if you get everything you want every single time? You don't want life to be one long boring rerun, and you like to adjust to the world as it really is. Some folks may be judgmental, but you know what's best for you.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which plant is commonly used as a herbal treatment for depression?

- A. St. Johns Wort
- B. Eucalyptus
- C. Slippery Elm
- D. Aloe Vera

02. What is unusual about the dwelling of Baba Yaga, a fearsome character in Slavic folklore?

- A. It is built of skulls
- B. It is edible
- C. It sits on bird's legs
- D. It can only be seen when she permits

03. In water skiing as a competitive sport who, apart from the skier and a person to pull them, is needed?

- A. Spare person available to drive whatever is pulling
- B. Boat technician
- C. Spotter
- D. None

Answers: 1.A 2.C 3.C

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

A little extra mental energy juices up your personal ambitions, and you should amp up your attention in personal relationships. You're at your most charismatic, so you can cast a spell over even the toughest of friends, coworkers, or family members who don't seem to understand what you want of them. Make the most of this energy by using your power of discernment. Blasting this all over everyone is a huge waste!

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you haven't been feeling up to snuff, now is a great time to shape up! Everything is in just the right place for you to revamp your exercise and eating to bring about a healthier, happier you. You should see dramatic physical results, but your mental health and stress levels should benefit as well. For you, a little bit every day is better than going overboard only to lose steam later on. Integrate these new choices into your daily life.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've been somewhat suspicious for a while, but now you know for sure. Something just isn't working out, and it's time to do something about it. Luckily, your energy is perfect for sweeping away whatever's bothering you as long as you're willing to do some grunt work. That includes taking stock of your behavior and what's worked in the past. Then leap to take advantage of your new opportunities.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you try to hide from reality, you only cause more havoc than you've already got right now, so face up to the facts as you juggle personal and professional options. You may have to work through some scary issues, but you can deal with it all honestly and bravely. You used to think there were monsters in the closet when you turned off the light, so try using the power of your inner light to help dispel your fears.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Old family dynamics might be showing up now in your other relationships, often when you least expect it. It's past time for you to take a look at any emotional baggage from your childhood and how it is adversely affecting your primary personal relationships. Now that you're all grown up, you need to stop those old bad habits from turning into full-blown problems in the present.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Your career track may feel like it's hit a dead end lately, but you're not panicking yet. You can tell that this time you can find a way out or around, with a little work from you and a push from your personal energy stores. While you're chafing in your current position, it's also a little scary to force yourself out of the nest. You've got the power to fly higher, though, so go for it!

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Recruit an unlikely ally if you want to pull off a surprising victory when the opposition least expects it. Now is the time to put aside your differences and tackle this big project jointly. The two of you almost certainly have very different motives, but in the end, you want to see the same results. Stay focused on that and it should be enough to get you past any petty differences of opinion or ego clashes that crop up.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You finally get what you really want. Ddo you know what it is? It could be the relationship you've been dreaming of, or maybe that promotion or new project funding falls into your lap when you least expect it. You can't just sit back and relax, the way most other people would, so see if you can coax out just a wee bit more, like maybe a firmer commitment or extra job perks. Just try not to seem overly aggressive

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Business has to come before pleasure today if you want to defuse that potentially stormy situation brewing at home. If you tackle big tasks as they arise, you should be able to get them done with time for family. Don't be content to just do nothing. Work a little harder and make an effort to get ahead of yourself so you can spruce up your home, romance your partner, or catch up with friends you haven't seen in far too long.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

M	A	D	E
R	R	S	T
C	B	P	D
A	U	O	T

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

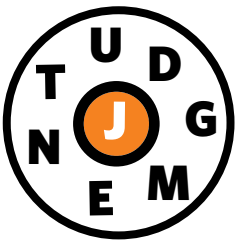
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

		2		3	8			
	9	1					7	
			2		9		3	6
8		7	3		2	6		
2								5
		5	8		4	7		3
4	2		9		7			
	8					4	6	
			4	8		3		

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

2	6	3	1	8	4	9	5	7
7	9	4	3	2	5	6	8	1
1	8	5	7	9	6	3	2	4
3	2	7	4	1	8	5	9	6
5	1	8	9	6	7	4	3	2
6	7	9	2	5	3	8	1	4
4	3	1	6	7	2	8	4	5
9	3	1	6	7	2	8	4	5
8	7	2	4	5	9	1	6	3
4	6	8	3	1	2	7	9	5

JULES' LAW!

Frenchman scores the winner as Barca edge Real to win Copa del Rey title

Seville, Spain - A Jules Kounde goal in the dying minutes of extra time handed Barcelona a dramatic 3-2 win over fierce rivals Real Madrid in an enthralling Copa del Rey final in a raucous atmosphere at Seville's La Cartuja stadium on Saturday.

Barca won a record extending 32nd Spanish Cup title thanks to a stunning strike from the French defender, who slotted a low drive into the bottom corner from 25 yards in the 116th minute.

The match ended on a sour note for Real Madrid as Antonio Ruediger and Lucas Vazquez, both on the bench after being substituted earlier, received red cards for dissent from the sidelines, with Jude Bellingham also being flashed a red after the final whistle for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Pedri put Barca ahead in the 28th minute with a brilliant curling strike into the top corner from outside the box in a first-half they dominated. However, Real took control in the second half as Kylian Mbappe, who was absent from the starting XI as he has yet to regain full fitness from an ankle



Barcelona players celebrate with the Copa del Rey trophy after beating Real Madrid in the final in Seville on Saturday

injury, came off the bench to score the equaliser from a free kick in the 70th minute.

Aurelien Tchouameni gave Real Madrid the lead seven minutes later with a towering header from a corner before Ferran Torres found the equaliser in a counter attack in the 84th minute that took the game to extra time.

Just when it seemed like the title would have to be settled in a

penalty shootout, Kounde finally scored the winner that earned Barca a title that gave German manager Hansi Flick his first major title with Barca, crowning a brilliant season in which they are also bidding for the LaLiga and Champions League titles while Real are now left only with LaLiga as they bid to avoid a trophy-less campaign.

"It was a good time to give the

It was a good time to give the fans something to cheer about. Let's enjoy it, but don't overdo it because the Champions League semifinals are coming up in a few days

FERRAN TORRES, BARCELONA

fans something to cheer about. Let's enjoy it, but don't overdo it because the Champions League semi-finals are coming up in a few days," player of the match Ferran Torres told TVE. "Without a doubt, it was the most physically demanding game I've played in my life.

"It tastes better that way, especially when it's Real Madrid in front of us."

It was a nail-biting, ill-tempered encounter fueled by Friday's turmoil ignited after Real Madrid decided to boycott pre-match activities in protest against the Spanish FA's refereeing.

Simply perfect night, says proud Flick

Seville, Spain - Barcelona manager Hansi Flick was thrilled with his side's heroics to roar back and grab a breath-taking 3-2 win in extra-time and beat fierce rivals Real Madrid to lift the Copa del Rey title on Saturday.

The German coach said that his treble chasing players should not hold back in celebrating the record-extending 32nd Spanish Cup title and worry later about Wednesday's Champions League semi-finals first-leg against Inter Milan.

"It has been a simply perfect night," Flick told a press conference in the early hours of Sunday.

"I am very proud. For me, it's amazing what they are doing, how they fight. I really appreciate what they do, that they never give up. I think everyone, the club, the fans, are proud of this team.

"To win a title in a game like the Clasico against Real Madrid is always special. I'm happy for my players and for the thousands of fans who were in the stands, they deserved this title.

"Now we must celebrate and then the objective must be to recover, recover and re-

cover. The treble is an option, but we have to keep working."

Barca, in scintillating form, recorded their third consecutive win against a stumbling Real Madrid who have already lost 4-0 at Santiago Bernabeu in LaLiga in October and 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia in January.

The blaugranas are undefeated in domestic competition since late December, playing some of the best football in Europe this season, in the driver's seat to win the Spanish league title.



Barcelona manager Hansi Flick celebrates with Jules Kounde after the match

Barca top LaLiga on 76 points, four ahead of Real, and after Wednesday's

Champions League match against Inter, they will face last-placed Valladolid before hosting Real in a LaLiga clash that could decide the league title on May 11.

Flick attributed his side's success to the attitude of his players and how focus they have been, saying that the sky is the limit if they keep their feet on the ground.

"At the beginning of the season I said I was here, with my assistants, to create a good atmosphere in the dressing room," Flick said.

We did great until we were shocked late, says Real Madrid's Ancelotti



Carlo Ancelotti

Seville, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti was devastated as he felt his side should have taken more from Saturday's 3-2 loss in the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona where they conceded a late equaliser that led the game to extra-time, when their bitter rivals roared back to score a winner through Jules Kounde.

Real fought their way back into the game after being 1-0 down at halftime but saw Barca forward Ferran Torres snatch a

We were close to winning and we conceded a strange goal very late ... A ball at the back of the defence ...

CARLO ANCELOTTI

goal in a counter attack in the 84th minute that gave the Catalan giants new life.

"We were close to winning and we conceded a strange goal very late ... A ball at the back of the defence ... But against Barca it can happen," Ancelotti told a press conference in the early hours of Sunday.

"We tried until the end, we came close... The second half was very good, but that's football. The match was evenly balanced. Barca were better in the first half, we were better in the second.

"There is nothing bad to say

about the team who fought really hard. We competed very well. If we had won, it wouldn't have been a scandal. We did great until we were shocked late..."

In a season in which they are struggling with inconsistency, Real Madrid are now left only with LaLiga as they bid to avoid a trophy-less campaign.

Last-year's Spanish and European champions have been left licking their wounds after a humbling loss to Arsenal saw them exit the Champions League in the

quarter-finals and are also battling against the odds to retain their LaLiga crown, with Barcelona in the driver's seat.

Barca are at the top of the standings, leading by four points over Real with five matches to play, and they will host Real in a LaLiga clash that could decide the league title on May 11.

"We have competed and we will also compete at Barcelona in the upcoming LaLiga game. We will compete like we did tonight," Ancelotti said.

Duran scores double as Al Nassr storm into Asian Champions League semifinals

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Al Nassr ensured all three Saudi Pro League sides reached the Asian Champions League Elite semifinals as Stefano Pioli's side handed Yokohama F Marinos a 4-1 defeat on Saturday.

First-half goals from Jhon Duran, Sadio Mane and Cristiano Ronaldo sent Al Nassr on the way to victory in the quarterfinal, with Duran adding a fourth soon after the interval before Kota Watanabe scored a consolation for last year's runners-up.

The win sees Al Nassr join compatriots Al Ahli, who handed Thailand's Buriram United a 3-0 defeat in the last eight, and Al-Hilal in the last four with one quarter-final, featuring Japan's Kawasaki Frontale and Al-Sadd of Qatar, to be played on Sunday.

Strikes from Riyad Mahrez and Galeno gave Al Ahli a two-goal lead by the sixth minute and Roberto Firmino added the third 15 minutes before the interval to complete a comfortable win at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium.

"I think tonight we played well



Al Nassr's Jhon Duran celebrates his goal against Yokohama F Marinos on Saturday

from the start of the game," said Mane after Al Nassr's big win. "We created many chances and we scored four goals, I think we deserved to win and I'm really happy.

"We have our target. We're going to take it game-by-game and we now have another important game in the next round."

Marinos' Australian defender Thomas Deng sliced Mane's cross from the left onto his own post in the 27th minute and Duran pounced on the rebound to give the Saudi side the lead.

Mane added the second four minutes later when he latched onto Otavio's through ball before beating goalkeeper Park Il-gyu at

his near post.

The third came in the 38th minute as Al Nassr put the result beyond doubt before the half-time whistle.

Marcelo Brozovic's shot from the edge of the penalty box was partially blocked but, after the ball looped into the area, Park's failure to punch clear resulted in

Ronaldo volleying home.

Duran capitalised on another defensive error to score his second four minutes after the restart but four minutes later Marinos pulled one back when Watanabe completed an intricate move with an assured finish from Anderson Lopes' lay-off.

Marinos threatened to claw their way back into the game with Lopes firing wildly off target from close range and Kenta Inoue seeing his attempt ruled out for offside in the build-up.

The Japanese side's dwindling hopes were extinguished with 17 minutes remaining when Watanabe picked up a second booking for a desperate challenge on Aiman Yahya as the Saudi midfielder galloped through the centre circle.

Park denied Mane a fifth for Al Nassr in the dying minutes as the Riyadh-based side progressed to the last four.

Jeddah is hosting the latter stages of the Asian Champions League Elite, with the quarter-finals, semis and final all being played in the city.

Bayern brush aside Mainz, but title party still on hold

Munich, Germany - Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich eased past Mainz 05 3-0 on Saturday but had to put title celebrations on ice after Bayer Leverkusen matched their win to stay eight points behind with three matches left to play.

The Bavarians, who top the standings with 75 points ahead of reigning champions Leverkusen, can secure a 34th German league title with a win at RB Leipzig next week.

But they will have to do it without Bundesliga top scorer Harry Kane, with the England striker desperate to clinch the first trophy of his career for club or country, as he will be suspended after picking up a fifth booking and a suspension.

"It's not ideal but we won," said Bayern coach Vincent Kompany of Kane's yellow card. "But it is not like a final (next week)."

"We will play 34 games this season and I think (injured) guys like Jamal (Musiala), Alphonso (Davies), Dayot Upamecano and (Hiroki) Ito also have to celebrate the title," he said.

"Every title you have to celebrate it like it's your first so I don't think it will make much of a difference for Harry."

"It doesn't take away a single percent of his contribution this season."

With 24 league goals this term, the 31-year-old England captain looks set to become the first player to be crowned the league's top scorer in each of his first two Bundesliga seasons.

"Crazy, crazy decision," said Kane. "It's kind of my story that I'll miss the Leipzig game. But no worries, I'll celebrate more than anyone else."

Mainz dropped to seventh place and outside the European qualifying places.

REDS REIGN SUPREME

Liverpool crush Tottenham to win Premier League title

Liverpool, England - Liverpool roared back from a goal behind to thrash Tottenham Hotspur 5-1 and wrap up the Premier League title in style on a momentous day at Anfield on Sunday.

Needing only a point to ensure a record-equalling 20th English title with four games remaining, Liverpool were rocked in the 12th minute as Dominic Solanke headed Tottenham in front.

But the title party was only temporarily silenced as Liverpool struck back with a Luis Diaz tap-in, an Alexis Mac Allister thunderbolt and a Cody Gakpo shot before halftime.

A one-sided second half saw Mohamed Salah end a six-match scoring drought by firing a low shot past Guglielmo Vicario in the 63rd minute - celebrating his 28th league goal of an outstanding season by snapping a selfie with a fan.

Tottenham's Destiny Udogie then bundled in an own goal to complete a miserable afternoon for the visitors who have lost 19 Premier League games this season. Liverpool, who have now matched Manchester United's English titles record, have 82 points from 34 games played with Arsenal a distant second on 67.



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah takes a selfie with fans after scoring against Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday

Hojlund rescues Manchester United

Rasmus Hojlund scored an equaliser deep into stoppage time as Manchester United salvaged a 1-1 away draw at Bournemouth, who played the last half hour with 10 men after a controversial sending off.

Antoine Semenyo had put the

hosts ahead in the 23rd and United were staring at a 16th defeat of the season before the Dane came to the rescue after six of nine extra minutes at the Vitality Stadium.

Bournemouth lost Brazilian striker Evanilson in the 70th after a VAR review of a slip-sliding tackle on Noussair Mazraoui up-

The second half saw Mohamed Salah end a six-match scoring drought by firing a low shot past Guglielmo Vicario - celebrating his 28th league goal of the season by snapping a selfie with a fan

graded the card from yellow to red. The result left Bournemouth in 10th place, while Europa League semi-finalists United gained a point and moved up to 14th.

"It is very frustrating, This win

would have meant a lot to us. A point is a big difference," said Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola, whose side could qualify for the UEFA Conference League if they finish eighth.

The Spaniard said Evanilson

had simply slipped and the club would be appealing the consequent three-match ban.

"Of course we are going to appeal. It is common sense. In the first half Evanilson gets a kick in the chest by Casemiro.

"I don't think you should have a red card for this," he said.



Alex Marquez celebrates winning the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday

Alex Marquez wins in Spain, Marc crashes

Jerez, Spain - Gresini Racing's Alex Marquez claimed his first MotoGP race victory at the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday to snatch the championship lead from his elder brother Marc, who crashed early in the race and finished 12th.

After seven second-place finishes in sprints and races this season, Alex claimed a dream race win on home turf in front of over 100,000 fans, with the Spaniard imploring them to increase the volume even when he had a few corners left on the final lap.

Fabio Quartararo finished second to give Yamaha their first podium since the 2023 Indonesian Grand Prix while Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia came in third.

Marc squeezed his way through the crowd to embrace Alex in the winner's circle as the two Spaniards became the first brothers to win in MotoGP.

But the day belonged to the Gresini rider who leads his elder sibling by one point in the standings after taking the chequered flag, which was waved by Spanish tennis player Carlos Alcaraz.

Sarr-lit night at Wembley as Palace stun Villa to reach FA Cup final

London, England - Crystal Palace outplayed Aston Villa as they soared into the FA Cup final for only the third time with two brilliant goals by Ismaila Sarr and a stunner by Eberechi Eze sealing a 3-0 victory in an entertaining clash at Wembley on Saturday.

Palace's fans, dreaming of a first major trophy in the south London club's 119-year history, cranked up the volume from the first minute and were rewarded in thrilling fashion as the Eagles moved one win away from delivering silverware.

England forward Eze put Palace ahead in the 31st minute with a sweetly-struck right-foot shot from just outside the penalty area after being picked out by the irrepressible Sarr.

Tyrick Mitchell spurned a glorious chance to make it 2-0 just before halftime and when Jean-Philippe Mateta blazed a penalty wide shortly after the restart Palace might have feared they would be made to pay by their Premier League rivals.

But lacklustre Villa could not cope with Palace's relentless en-



Ismaila Sarr of Crystal Palace celebrates after scoring against Aston Villa in their FA Cup semifinal on Saturday

ergy and Sarr then sent a long-range low drive past Emiliano Martinez just before the hour to put his side firmly in control.

The Palace party was already in full swing when Sarr burst clear in stoppage time to finish in style.

Palace lost in the 1990 and 2016 finals, both to Manchester United, and will hope to make it third time lucky on May 17 against either Manchester City or

Nottingham Forest, who meet in the second semi-final back at Wembley on Sunday.

Less than a fortnight ago Villa bowed out of the Champions League in a blaze of glory as they beat Paris St Germain 3-2 at Villa Park only to lose 5-4 on aggregate but this time slunk out of Wembley looking crestfallen.

Defeat by Palace will sting more as their were genuine

hopes that Villa could win their first FA Cup since 1957 and a first trophy since 1996. In reality they were demolished by a far hungrier Palace side who also knocked them out of this year's League Cup and took four points off them in the league.

Palace are thriving under Austrian coach Oliver Glasner, who took charge 14 months ago, despite a slow start to the season.

Djokovic unsure of Madrid return after early exit

Madrid, Spain - Three-time champion Novak Djokovic may have played at the Madrid Open for the last time after crashing out in the second round to Italian Matteo Arnaldi on Saturday, with the Serbian admitting he did not know if he would return.

Arnaldi beat fourth seed Djokovic 6-3 6-4 to reach the third round. The result condemned the 37-year-old, who received a bye in the opening round, to his third consecutive defeat.

Djokovic, who has been chasing a 100th tour-level title, was handed a shock defeat in Miami Open final in late March before his second-round Monte Carlo exit earlier this month.

All three defeats came in straight sets.

"Obviously after you lose a match you don't feel good, but I've had a few of these this year where I lose in the first round, unfortunately," Djokovic told a press conference.

"I think the positive thing is that I really enjoyed myself more than I have in the Monte-Carlo or some other



Obviously after you lose a match you don't feel good, but I've had a few of these this year where I lose in the first round

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

tournament, so that's a good thing.

"But obviously still level of tennis is not where I would like it to be. But it is what it is. I lost to a better player."

Djokovic, who made his Madrid debut in 2006 and won the tournament in 2011, 2016 and 2019, was looking for his first win on clay since defeating Carlos Alcaraz to win gold at the Paris Olympics.

Asked whether he just played his last match in Madrid, Djokovic said: "It could be. It could be. I'm not sure if I will come back. So, I don't know, I don't know what to say. I mean, I'll come back, maybe not as a player. I hope it's not, but it could be."

Djokovic won three out of the four major titles in 2023 but has not been able to reproduce that kind of form since, being shut out of the game's biggest tournaments last year as Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz claimed took majors apiece.

Ethiopia's Assefa wins London Marathon

London, England - Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa shattered the women's-only world record in winning the 45th London Marathon on Sunday, while Kenyan Sebastian Sawe made a brilliant tactical decision to demolish a stacked men's field en route to victory.

The 28-year-old Assefa, silver medalist in the event at last year's Paris Olympics, pulled away from Joyciline Jepkosgei of Kenya over the final couple of

kilometres after the two had set a blistering early pace.

She crossed the finish line in two hours, 15 minutes and 50 seconds, beating the previous women's-only record of 2:16:16 set last year in London by Kenyan Peres Jepchirchir, and said the blazing London sun helped, with temperatures approaching 20 degrees Celsius by race's end.

"Last year, I did have some problems with the cold," said As-

sefa, who was second in the 2024 London race. "My hamstring tightened up towards the end of the race. This year, the weather suited me really well, and that's why I'm really pleased with the way the race went.

"I was second here last year, and to win here this year is very special."

Jepkosgei, 31, crossed second in 2:18:44.

The sizzling early pace was too much for reigning Olympic

marathon champion and 2024 London winner Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands, who fell back off the leaders around the halfway mark en route to finishing third in 2:19:00.

The 29-year-old Sawe, who made a stunning marathon debut by winning in Valencia in December, pulled away from the lead pack when the others reached for bottles to refuel with about 10 kilometres to go, on his way to crossing in 2:02:27.



Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa celebrates after winning the 45th London Marathon on Sunday

MUMBAI MATINEE

Suryakumar, Rickelton and Bumrah star as Mumbai Indians ease past Lucknow

Mumbai, Indians - Mumbai Indians (MI) sealed their fifth consecutive win in comfortable fashion this season to climb to 12 points in ten games. It was a near-perfect day for the hosts in front of 19,000 kids as they defeated Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) for the first time in a league-stage fixture.

Half-centuries from Ryan Rickelton and Suryakumar Yadav - who also became the third-fastest to 4000 IPL runs - helped them set 215 before Jasprit Bumrah's four-for and Trent Boult's three-for sealed a 54-run win.

Mayank Yadav was back in LSG colours for the first time this season. His pace had dropped but his slower ones were effective and took 2 for 40 in his four overs. Mitchell Marsh and Nicholas Pooran got starts but LSG's middle order, including an out-of-sorts Rishabh Pant, crumbled again. The chase fizzled out with the their last six wickets falling for 26 runs.

The day began with Mayank being announced as Shardul



Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with Suryakumar Yadav after taking the wicket of Lucknow Super Giants' Aiden Markram

Thakur's replacement. He took the new ball and bowled in the mid 130-kph to early 140-kph range. The bumper he tried in the first over got spongy bounce and went above Rickelton's head. But an overpitched ball next up was thumped down the ground.

In his next over, Mayank tested the middle of the pitch. Rohit Sharma hit two sixes with the pull, one in front of square and one behind. The response was a change in line, length and pace. It worked as Rohit reached out and sliced a slower length ball to short third.

Rickelton could've been run-

out in the second over but Aiden Markram missed a direct hit from point. Rickelton showed his trust in the pitch as he slogged and pulled balls off a length. He drove a full toss down to take 15 off Prince Yadav's first over. There were no other chances created in the 66-run powerplay.

Digvesh Rathi came in having not conceded a single six in the powerplay, but Rickelton slog swept him twice for two sixes over midwicket before reaching a 25-ball fifty. Rathi changed ends and bowled quicker and straighter on return. Rickelton's tried to capitalise on the googly

when it was tossed up outside off, but ended up slicing straight to point in the ninth over. He made 58.

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 47

6 PM



RAJASTHAN ROYALS

VS

GUJARAT TITANS



Bhuvneshwar Kumar took three wickets for 33 runs to help Royal Challengers Bengaluru restrict Delhi Capitals to 162 for 8. KL Rahul topscored for Delhi with 41 runs while Tristan Stubbs made 34

Arya, Prabhsimran shine for Punjab Kings before rain plays spoilsport

Kolkata, India - Punjab Kings (PBKS) had to settle for just one point despite scoring 201 on a slow pitch, as late-evening thundershowers washed out the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) chase in Kolkata. PBKS would be disappointed for they had done the hard work on a pitch whose consensus reading was "very, very slow". The one point moved PBKS to No. 4 on the IPL 2025

points table while the lagging KKR rose to No. 7 with seven points from nine matches.

Outside of the frustration of not getting the win, PBKS must be pleased with their openers, Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh, whose half-centuries took them to the daunting total. Especially how they scored the runs. They were almost obsessed with not over-hitting, holding their

shape, and relying more on their timing, adding 120 for the first wicket, PBKS' only century stand this IPL. Arya scored 69 off 35, Prabhsimran 83 off 49, and even though the last six overs produced only 42, PBKS were confident they had scored an above-par total.

On the slow track with grip available for those bowling into the pitch, PBKS took 74 off the



Prabhsimran Singh scored 83 runs off 49 balls

eight overs of spin between Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine. Even Harshit Rana, KKR's slower-ball specialist, was allowed to bowl only two overs for 27 runs.

Arya, in particular, was clever in his targeting of the bowlers. He took 50 off 20 balls of pace, and just 19 off 15 balls of spin. Prabhsimran took the spinners on, taking 41 off 22 balls bowled by

them. Both of them were measured in the first couple of overs, getting used to the pace in the pitch, before targeting the pace bowlers. Arya preferred timing - his first four fours were driven between mid-off and cover - and Prabhsimran struggled early, getting to only 34 off 32 at one point.

With an audacious switch-hit six off Narine, Prabhsimran turned his innings around, in the

process consigning Narine to a 22-run over. His worst has been 23 in all T20 cricket. Prabhsimran scored 49 off the last 17 balls he faced; Shreyas Iyer made only five in a 40-run stand with him.

That the death overs were not easy to hit only encouraged PBKS.

Andre Russell got reverse-swing, Narine and Varun conceded just 13 in their final overs.

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SOUTH KOREA



Journey of awe

In the dynamic heart of Seoul, South Korea, I found myself immersed in a journalistic experience that exceeded every expectation. Known globally for its technological prowess, South Korea surprised me with its presentation of cutting-edge innovation and untouched natural beauty, revealing a rare vision of progress that doesn't come at the expense of peace.

Hosted by the Journalists Association of Korea, the World Journalists Conference 2025 brought together a diverse group of international reporters, editors, and media professionals, all convening in Seoul to engage with some of the most urgent issues of our time. The issues discussed ranged from artificial intelligence and climate change to the evolving landscape of global media.

Innovation meets environment

The programme began on March 30 - the official events beginning the next morning with the first conference session - 'Shaping the Future of Journalism in the AI Media Era: Copyright and Ethical Challenges'. Journalists from around the world discussed the impact of AI-generated content and the importance of maintaining ethical standards despite AI's rapid advancement.

After a special lecture, the opening ceremony followed. It included a video introduction to Korea and a welcoming speech by Park Jong Hyun, president of the Journalists Association of Korea.

In the afternoon, the second session was on 'The Role of Journalism in Confronting Climate Change and Environmental Shifts'. Speakers from different regions spoke about the human side of the climate crisis and the responsibility of journalism in raising awareness and pushing for change.

From these discussions, it became clear that what sets South Korea apart is the nation's remarkable ability to nurture both rapid technological advancement and pristine natural beauty. Towering skyscrapers coexist alongside mountains and forests. Sleek high-speed trains glide past shimmering emerald rice fields. These are living testaments to a nation that plans with purpose whilst holding reverence for its land.

While the conference sessions were informative, the site visits added even greater depth to the overall experience. On April 1, participants visited the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), a location historically known for conflict and division. Today, the area has been transformed into an unexpected lush sanctuary, full of wildlife. This place is a powerful metaphor for the spirit of South Korea - that even places once defined by conflict can be transformed into spaces of peace and possibility.

From there, the group travelled to Jeju Island, where they spent the next two days visiting various natural and cultural sites. The itinerary included

Senior scribe in Oman, **Hatim al Taie** visits Seoul, in South Korea, to participate in the World Journalists Conference 2025 and comes away awestruck by the fact that South Korea is a nation where past and future are not at odds but in dialogue. Here, he recounts his experience



stops along the coastline, historic villages, and local media outlets focused on preserving regional language and environmental heritage.

Power of peace

H E Sheikh Zakaria al Saadi, Oman's Ambassador to South Korea, praised the Korean people for their kindness and unwavering dedication to peace and unity. He described South Korea as a development model worth emulating because of how it has rebuilt itself out of the devastation of war into a beacon of progress, all while honouring its cultural roots.

The ambassador's words resonated with many of the conference's atten-

dees. The shared sentiment among all was that South Korea is a story of economic success. Even beyond its success, South Korea is more than just a country of rapid development: it is a society grounded in community, family, and open-hearted hospitality.

One of the most notable moments of the conference was the collective agreement among the international journalists regarding how important it is to amplify the Palestinian cause. They emphasised the vital role of truthful and courageous journalism in defence of human rights.

A large number of the gathering in the Ambassador's house were Omani students, many of whom are pursuing

degrees in medicine. Their desire to learn in Korea reflected the growing cultural and educational ties between Oman and South Korea. Both countries shared a mutual interest in fostering talent and building a future of mutual respect and understanding.

Sweet surprise

On April 3, after travelling through Chungju and Anseong, participants visited a vineyard in the Chungcheongbuk-do region known for producing 'Shine Muscat' grapes. These seedless, light green grapes are considered a luxury product in South Korea. They are grown with careful attention, in neat clusters beneath protective netting that is designed to shield them from pests and rough weather. Their flavour is distinctively sweet and crisp, often likened to honey or melon.

The visit was illuminating for the participants, who were able to gain insight into South Korea's approach to agriculture and how traditional farming practices are integrated alongside modern ones.

Originally developed in Japan, the Shine Muscat grapes have become a symbol of refinement in South Korea, and they are often gifted on special occasions. They are even sold individually in ornate boxes at high-end department stores. Each bunch costs a steep price, not just because of their taste, but because of the labour-intensive process required to cultivate them. Farmers must carefully prune and bag each individual cluster by hand, to ensure consistent sunlight and protection throughout the growing season.

This high attention to detail reflects the values that seem to permeate South Korean society—precision, respect for tradition, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Although these grapes might appear on the surface to be an indulgence, they actually support the larger narratives of South Korean sustainability, innovation, and cultural identity.

Carrying the knowledge of the Shine Muscat grape trees, and their seeds back home to Oman, I planted a single seed from a Shine Muscat grape in the cool soil of Jabal Akhdar. I did so not in expectation, but out of reverence and respect. I hoped to create a quiet act of connection between two landscapes that understand the value of patience, care, and hospitality.

Blueprint for tomorrow

From its peaceful diplomacy to its forward-thinking urban design, from its technological brilliance to its deeply embedded sense of hospitality, South Korea offers more than progress - it offers perspective.

It is not just a country you visit. It is a country you learn from.

South Korea is a nation where past and future are not at odds, but in dialogue. A reminder that resilience, balance, and bold imagination can, together, shape a brighter world.

EGYPT
IS TAKING
STEPS TO CLEAN
UP THE PYRAMIDS
OF GIZA. PYRAMIDS OF GIZA
REVAMP PROJECT HOPES TO CURB
CONGESTION AND AGGRESSIVE VENDORS

PYRAMIDS’ PEEVE

Millions of visitors travel to Egypt each year to see the iconic Pyramids of Giza. However, despite being one of the world’s most famous ancient sites, the experience leaves many travellers with unpleasant memories.

For years, the UNESCO World Heritage Site has been plagued by poor management, unregulated and aggressive vendors, and reports of animal cruelty. Now, Egypt is taking steps to clean up the Pyramids of Giza - but the revamp has got off to a rocky start.

Experiences of overcrowding and persistent tour touters have tarnished many tourists’ experiences of the Giza Plateau - home to several pyramids and the Great Sphinx. The Egyptian government’s newly unveiled plan now aims to relaunch the site with improved management and regulations.

The project, led by Orascom Pyramids Entertainment Services Company, is reportedly set to cost US\$51mn. This week, a new access point to the complex on the Fayoum Highway was tested, replacing the historic entrance near Marriott Mena House, which frequently suffers from traffic jams and congestion.

Vendors woes

But the trial run faced pushback from horse and camel tour operators, who blocked vehicles from entering in a protest against their relocation to new designated parking areas. They say these are too far from the entrance and will damage business. The vendors have also long been accused of harassment and extortion by visitors.

Businessman Naguib Sawiris, the founder of Orascom Telecom Holding and Orascom Investment Holding, wrote on X that sellers who refuse to move to the new zone area would be banned.

“The well-being of the public and preservation of this

treasure is far more important than catering to the interests of 2,000 individuals who have caused harm to the country for years,” he posted.

Electric vehicles introduced

The new measures also prohibit private vehicles and tour buses from entering the plateau, instead providing visitors and their guides with eco-friendly electric vehicles to get around the site.

While the transition aims to improve the sustainability of the complex, some visitors have complained on social media about the availability of the vehicles, saying they’ve been forced to wait or walk in the heat.

Orascom issued a statement in response, stating that 45 electric buses had been made available on the site and are scheduled to run every five minutes.

The revamp will also see several tombs restored, the introduction of online ticketing and a new visitor centre.

Some hope that the relocation of tour vendors is also a step towards bringing an end to animal cruelty reported at the site. A recent investigation by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) found instances of routine abuse and animals left to rot at the side of the road.

“PETA has documented the routine punching, kicking, whipping, and starving of horses and camels at the pyramids,” says PETA Asia vice president Jason Baker.

“Animals are literally ridden to death and then dumped like rubbish outside the gate. The Pyramids of Giza should symbolise Egypt’s beauty and history - not unchecked animal abuse. The Egyptian government must act to remove these suffering animals from Giza,” he added.

The campaign group is, hence, urging tourists not to engage the services of these animal tour companies.

(Courtesy: euronews.com)

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TECHNIQUE

The Giza pyramid complex consists of the Great Pyramid (also known as the Pyramid of Cheops or Khufu and constructed c.2580 – c.2560 BC), the slightly smaller Pyramid of Khafre (or Chephren) a few hundred metres to the south-west, and the relatively modest-sized Pyramid of Menkaure (or Mykerinos) a few hundred metres farther south-west.

The Great Sphinx lies on the east side of the complex. Consensus among Egyptologists is that the head of the Great Sphinx is that of Khafre. Along with these major monuments are a number of smaller satellite edifices, known as ‘queens’ pyramids, causeways, and temples.

Most construction theories are based on the idea that the pyramids were built by moving huge stones from a quarry and dragging and lifting them into place. To ensure that the pyramid remained symmetrical, the exterior casing stones all had to be equal in height and width.

Workers might have marked all the blocks to indicate the angle of the pyramid wall and trimmed the surfaces carefully so that the blocks fit together. During construction, the outer surface of the stone was smooth limestone; excess stone has eroded over time.



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